

# **THE GREAT RIVER OF BLESSINGS**

**THE RINCHEN TERDZÖ IN ORISSA, INDIA**

**WALKER BLAINE**



Dedicated to

The Lineage of Sakyongs and the Kingdom of Shambhala

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## PREFACE

This book is an account of the Rinchen Terdzö that was conferred by His Eminence Tertön Namkha Drimed Rinpoche on the Kongma Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche between December 5th, 2008 and March 6th, 2009. The Rinchen Terdzö is a collection of hundreds of empowerments and teachings that bring together the essential terma lineages of the Nyingma, the earliest school of Tibetan Buddhism. The empowerments of the Rinchen Terdzö occurred at Rigon Thupten Mindrolling, His Eminence's monastery in the hot, isolated hills of Orissa, an hour and a half's drive from the east coast of India.

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche asked me to attend the Rinchen Terdzö in order to write a blog about the event. A newly edited version of the blog forms the basis of this book. The Sakyong wanted a daily report posted from India so that the Western sangha could learn what it was like for him to study and practice in Asia. The empowerments carried a special significance for Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche: Namkha Drimed Rinpoche had received the Rinchen Terdzö directly from the Sakyong's father, the Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. Receiving the Rinchen Terdzö meant that the Sakyong would carry the Vidyadhara's transmission lineage of the main practices in the Nyingma tradition.

There is a long list of thanks at the end of the book, but I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche for bestowing the Rinchen Terdzö on Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche and, in a sense, on the entire Shambhala community. I am also profoundly grateful to Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche for asking me to go to India and write about the empowerments. Personally speaking, attending the Rinchen Terdzö was one of the most extraordinary experiences of my life.

While in India, I found myself increasingly happy for Shambhala and the world because the teachings of the Rinchen Terdzö were being carried forward to the next generation.

## **THE GREAT RIVER OF BLESSINGS**

Through His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche's presence, I saw the living wisdom behind the words of the empowerments. Through his kindness and exertion, I had glimpses of the great potential that lies within us all. May all beings be quickly liberated from the sufferings of samsara and realize the dawn of the new golden age, the Kingdom of Shambhala, and the Great Eastern Sun.

Walker Blaine

May 21st, 2010

Halifax, Nova Scotia

dorjenaljorpa@gmail.com

## INTRODUCTION

### What Is The Rinchen Terdzö?



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

The Rinchen Terdzö, known in English as *The Precious Treasury of Termas*, is a collection of nearly 900 empowerments for meditation practices based on *termas*, treasure teachings that were concealed by one great master to be discovered at a later time (and sometimes place) by another great teacher when such teachings would be the most beneficial. The Shambhala termas discovered by the Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche are in this category of teaching. The Rinchen Terdzö was assembled by the 19th century teacher Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye (1813-1900). The collection is 111 volumes in its modern printing, with the average volume being between 500 and 600 pages long. The Rinchen Terdzö took 33 years to compile and is made up of the most historically important and vital termas discovered between the 11th and 19th centuries. Many of these termas remain popular even in the present day and are practiced by Asians and Westerners alike.

An empowerment (Skt. *abhisheka*, Tib. *wang*) is a ritual display of all aspects of the path to complete enlightenment from the perspective of a single style of vajrayana practice. Within the vajrayana there is a huge number and a great variety of abhishekas. It is very difficult to see how everything fits together. Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye masterfully organized the Rinchen Terdzö into a rich and detailed sequence that presents the full range of practices used in the Nyingma tradition, the oldest of the four major contemporary schools of Tibetan Buddhism. The Rinchen Terdzö itself, along with the each of the individual practice within it,

is a major teaching on the path of practice and realization.

Receiving the Rinchen Terdzö is a three-month experiential journey that starts at the entrance of the vajrayana path and moves through increasingly profound and subtle presentations of complete enlightenment. Along the way, the practitioner is led through all aspects of how to generate and stabilize the mind of wisdom. The journey is multilayered and presents the contemplative journey from a wide variety of entry points. It is like a compass or map marked with meditation techniques arranged according to the development and inclinations of the practitioner. On paper it is not easy to convey that the Rinchen Terdzö is a living transmission. The Sakyong remarked that in his 22 years of studies and retreats Asia he had never encountered such a wonderful situation for practice.

### Connections Between Then and Now



Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche in Tibet  
Photographer unknown

Until starting research a few months before my arrival in Orissa, most of what I knew about the Rinchen Terdzö came from *Born In Tibet*, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's account of his life in Tibet and escape to India. Descriptions of the Rinchen Terdzö take up many pages in the chapters dedicated to the Vidyadhara's education and early adulthood. Along with being eager to learn more about the mind and training of the Vidyadhara, I was excited to go to India to experience the Rinchen Terdzö myself and understand its importance to Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche and Shambhala.

The Rinchen Terdzö represents a major jewel that the Sakyong and Shambhala inherited from Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. The Vidyadhara said the collection contained all the wisdom held by his

predecessor, the 10th Trungpa. The practices presented in the Rinchen Terdzö, both historically and in their sequence as an intricate presentation of the path, represent the heart of the Nyingma tradition and in some ways, the heart of the vajrayana. All schools of Tibetan Buddhism, as well as Tibet's indigenous Bön religion, have important teachings in the collection. With respect to the Shambhala terma discovered nearly a century after Jamgön Kongtrül had compiled the Rinchen Terdzö, the collection is a presentation of the central lineage tradition from which the Shambhala teachings have sprung.

The Vidyadhara received the Rinchen Terdzö from his teacher, Jamgön Kongtrül of Shechen, a rebirth of Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye. Shechen Kongtrül received the lineage from Shechen Gyaltsap, who received it from Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye himself. There are varied accounts of how the lineage passed from Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye to Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. In this book I relied on Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's description in *Born In Tibet*, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche's remarks about conversations with his father, and statements made by Namkha Drimed Rinpoche's son, Jigme Rinpoche about the lineage of the Rinchen Terdzö.

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche bestowed the Rinchen Terdzö for the second and final time in 1958 at Yak Gompa in eastern Tibet. It was his last formal teaching before he started his escape to India. During the concluding ceremonies of the Rinchen Terdzö, the Vidyadhara empowered His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche as the primary teacher responsible for carrying on his transmission of the Rinchen Terdzö tradition. His Eminence is the only remaining holder of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's lineage of this precious collection of teachings. It is both wondrous and fortunate that His Eminence was able to bestow the empowerments on Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, the Vidyadhara's son and lineage heir.

His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche is an extraordinary individual. He is the supreme head of the Ripa lineage, which was established by Ripa Pema Deje Rolpa in the 17th century. The Ripa lineage has its roots in the termas of Taksham Nuden Dorje, whose practices Namkha Drimed Rinpoche also upholds. Many of the great masters of Tibet and especially of the Nyingma have praised His Eminence's realization and activity, and the Tibetan community holds him in high esteem for his kindness, wisdom, and the power of his practices for healing, divination, and the pacification of obstacles. His Eminence, like the Vidyadhara, is a tertön and he has revealed more than eight volumes of terma teachings. His most well-known terma revelations include many practices of the warrior-king Gesar of Ling, one of the ancestral sovereigns of the Shambhala tradition.

That the Rinchen Terdzö empowerments in Orissa, India and at Yak Gompa in Tibet were bestowed by living tertöns is remarkable. It is not always the case that the recipients of the empowerments have had such good fortune. These circumstances added to the profundity of the ceremonies in India, and pointed toward other important connections between the Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and Namkha Drimed Rinpoche. For example, the Vidyadhara and His Eminence shared visions of Akar Werma, the deity whom the Vidyadhara called Shiwa Ökar. Shiwa Ökar is an important figure in Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's Shambhala termas and in the New Treasures termas discovered by His Eminence.

Another connection between Namkha Drimed Rinpoche and Chögyam Trungpa



H. E. Namkha Drimed Rinpoche  
Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

Rinpoche has to do their personal and cultural relationship with Gesar of Ling, the legendary warrior-king who revived the vision of an enlightened kingdom in eastern Tibet during the tenth century. Gesar's influence on the Tibetan culture and practice was tremendous. Generally speaking, the tertöns from eastern Tibet often trace their former lives both to the time of Padmasambhava and to the court of Gesar of Ling. For example, His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche discovered a Gesar terma while visiting Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's monastery, Surmang Dütsi Til, when the Vidyadhara was young. The bardic tradition of telling Gesar stories and the terma tradition of Gesar practices continues to this day.

Gesar was cited by the Vidyadhara as one of the sources of the Shambhala teachings, and Gesar is also the most prominent of the ancestral sovereigns

mentioned in the Shambhala termas. Namkha Drimed Rinpoche has discovered a vast quantity of Gesar terma practices, far more than any other tertön. The Vidyadhara knew of His Eminence's relationship with Gesar and wrote a Gesar practice especially for him. On the occasion of their second meeting, at Pema Kö during their escape from Tibet, the Vidyadhara knew of His Eminence's arrival a day ahead of time through a vision of Gesar arriving with his retinue of warriors.

## The Rinchen Terdzö In Orissa

The recently completed main shrine room in the new monastery complex at Rigon Thupten Mindrolling was the site for the Rinchen Terdzö. The main shrine room was incredibly colorful and bright, with newly painted sculptures and frescos of hundreds of teachers, deities, and offerings. The monastery complex is part of five camps, villages that are home to a small, but thriving Tibetan community that grew from the refugees who settled in Orissa with Namkha Drimed Rinpoche in 1966.

The land around the camps is beautiful and rough. In the wintertime, the unirrigated fields used to raise corn after the summer monsoons are hard and dry. We saw no rain and hardly a cloud during the 95 days we spent in Orissa. Most of us were drinking four or more liters of water a day. The sun was so bright that by midday it was often overwhelming to stand outside for more than ten or twenty minutes at a time. Fortunately, the huge and airy main



shrine room remained pleasant and comfortable throughout the empowerments. The lack of rain made the threat of malaria low. Despite the heat we were told that it was cooler than usual during the Rinchen Terdzö. The three months of gentle conditions were said to be a sign that the local deities were happy about the events at the monastery.

### The Sponsors

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, the Sakyong Wangmo, and the Shambhala community were the primary sponsors of the Rinchen Terdzö. It was a huge effort for the monastery and the local community to host such a gathering. The inhabitants of the region, Tibetans and Indians, had never before witnessed anything on the scale of the Rinchen Terdzö. On many occasions Namkha Drimed Rinpoche stressed how important the ceremonies were for the well being of the region. Orissa is a major tantric site in India as well as being the region where the Buddha taught Kalachakra the tantra to King Dawa Sangpo, the first dharmaraja of Shambhala. Orissa had not been home to such lengthy, elaborate Buddhist practice for many centuries. This was due to Buddhism's almost total absence in India from the thirteenth century until the 1950s. The Rinchen Terdzö was like a cool breeze blowing the life-breath of tantra to Orissa's land and inhabitants.

### The Schedule

The schedule for participants at the Rinchen Terdzö was quite intense. During the three months of the event, apart from the three days of the Tibetan New Year, we had four days off. The events started at six-thirty in the morning when His Eminence's son, Dungse Lhunpo Dechen Gyurme Rinpoche, also known as Lhunpo Rinpoche and Lhuntrul Rinpoche, began the reading transmission. The reading transmission (Skt. *agama*, Tib. *lung*) was a reading of everything not spoken aloud during the empowerments. The lung continued until noon each morning with a one-hour break for breakfast.

After lunch, at one o'clock sharp, the empowerments began with the sound of *gyalings*, shrill Tibetan horns, heralding His Eminence's immanent arrival in the shrine room. The *gyalings* were the last minute warning for the rest of us to get to the main temple. The empowerments then ran for six or seven hours with a short tea served in the shrine room in the middle of the afternoon, and a brief bathroom break sometime later. The tea lasted ten or fifteen minutes at the most. Often we'd finish receiving the empowerments (sometimes fifteen in a day) at seven or eight o'clock in the evening.

It was inspiring to see how a large monastery with hundreds of lay guests could run like clockwork. This was possible because of the atmosphere of devotion around His Eminence's incredible discipline. His Eminence had the most demanding schedule of all. He rose at four in

the morning to do his personal meditation before he started specific practice preparations for the empowerments at six-thirty.

### The Recipients



The Kongma Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche  
Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

The foremost recipient of the Rinchen Terdzö was Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. Both he and Lhunpo Rinpoche were enthroned as holders of the lineage at the end of the event. Three others received the empowerments directly from His Eminence during the ceremonies: his son Jigme Rinpoche (who had been empowered as a lineage holder by His Eminence ten years ago in Tibet), His Eminence's nephew Tulku Kunkyang Rinpoche, and the Sakyong Wangmo Dechen Choying Sangmo, the youngest daughter of His Eminence and wife of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche.

The second tier of the recipients of the empowerments was made up of the rest of the Ripa family along with the khenpos, lamas, and honored guests at the event, such as the representatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. This group received the empowerment articles and substances (like water from ritual vases) from the five main recipients, who had already received the empowerment from His Eminence just a few moments earlier. At the end of each day, His Eminence, the Sakyong, and the other rinpoches, khenpos, lamas, and *chöpons* (the shrine master and assistants) would take the day's empowerment items out to the rest of the assembly to formally confirm the abhishekas on the rest of us. Often the day would close with a short feast offering before closing chants. The feast food sometimes included unusual treats like bubblegum, chokingly spiced deep fried pretzels, and tiny tubs of colorful sugared gelatin.

Seeing the empowerments bestowed in the context of the Ripa family lineage provided another context to understand the family lineage that Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche established at the center of the Shambhala tradition in the West. It was edifying to see that the wife and daughters of His Eminence were given the same honor and respect as the lamas and khenpos in the community. I have rarely seen feminine principle so universally respected in a male monastic environment. I recall how refreshing it was to see Tulku Kunkyang Rinpoche hug his cousin, one of the Sakyong Wangmo's sisters, one morning on the monastery steps. The moment of affection happened amidst a sea of young monks thundering down the stairs to get

to their breakfast. After closing chants each day, the daughters of His Eminence often stayed in the shrine room chatting and warmly nurturing the littlest of the monks, some of who were as young as four or five.

Altogether, about eight hundred people attended the entire Rinchen Terdzö. Of these, about 400 were monastics (a few of whom were nuns) and about 400 were Asian and Western lay practitioners. Almost everyone was a student of His Eminence, Jigme Rinpoche, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, or Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. Roughly 200 additional people attended the first week of the Rinchen Terdzö and the total number of participants swelled to 1,400 by the closing of the event. There were guests from India, Nepal, Bhutan, Japan, and all over Europe, as well as from North and South America. Along with the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo, five of the 12 long-term Shambhala participants came from Nova Scotia. Most of the Tibetan sangha in attendance were from the different camps, although some Tibetans came to Orissa from north and south India, Nepal, and Bhutan. The Tibetans at the empowerments ranged in age from newborn to great-grandparents in the community. It was wonderful to see that a large number of children, teenagers, and twenty-year olds were among the lay recipients of the Rinchen Terdzö.

### **The Teachers And Their Gifts**

One of the major gifts we received during the Rinchen Terdzö was a glimpse of the intensity of the practice tradition that existed in Tibet at the time of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. Seeing His Eminence on the throne from dawn till dark for three months gave a picture of the dedication and training that flourished in previous centuries. It also gave us a much better sense of what made the Vidyadhara who he was. One reason that the Sakyong wanted this transmission was to gather into himself more of what made his father such an incredible teacher. By the end of the empowerments I found myself thinking how little we have understood about the strength, courage, and determination of teachers of the past. In this era of air travel, perfect sound systems, and video recording we have had incredible treasures handed to us, but we often don't stop to consider what it takes to become a genuine holder of the teachings. I felt humbled and proud that the Sakyong does know what it takes to carry the teachings forward, and that he is doing his very best to prepare to pass the teachings on to the future Sakyong, to Shambhala, and to the rest of the world.

His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche is a brilliant and subtle teacher. I began attending his teachings in the West because he is an important figure in the lives of both the Sakyong and the Vidyadhara. It was not until the Rinchen Terdzö that I understood the depth of His Eminence's immersion in the lineage of formal practice and realization. When His Eminence is not practicing, he is either reading or writing texts. I think he is very special in

this regard. He reminds me of the great masters of the past who were one-pointed in their dedication to preserving the transmission lineage of the teachings.

As the days of the empowerments progressed and we settled into the rhythm of receiving the Rinchen Terdzö, I found Namkha Drimed Rinpoche's presence increasingly compelling. I began to pay more attention to the traditional advice about doing one's best to open up to the teacher as much as possible. It was an incredible opportunity to witness his discipline, devotion, and kindness for weeks on end. Occasionally His Eminence burst into a broad smile or fatherly chuckle from his seat. This would sometimes happen when members of his family started bumping into one another under his throne during a rapid series of empowerments. His Eminence is a truly remarkable teacher and a genuinely humble person. When the empowerments concluded and it was time to say goodbye, there was no adequate way to express how amazing it was to have spent so much time with him.

Throughout the Rinchen Terdzö I was able to meet with Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche and Jigme Rinpoche to ask questions and get advice about what to present in the blog. Many, if not all, of the insights and interesting ideas in this document came from them or from the various books I used for research. A particularly useful discussion came when I asked Jigme Rinpoche why so few of the empowerment rituals in the Rinchen Terdzö were written by the tertöns who originally discovered the termas. This question was important to me because the Vidyadhara did not write the empowerments for his two most well known *sadhana*s (liturgical practices), the *Sadhana Of Mahamudra* and *The Roar Of The Werma*, more commonly referred to as the *Werma Sadhana*.

Jigme Rinpoche explained that in many cases tertöns do not use empowerment rituals because they are so close to the source of the transmission of the terma. This made me think about how Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche presented the Shambhala teachings, his emphasis on creating an uplifted environment, and how powerful it was to be around him. Jigme Rinpoche went on to explain that an empowerment ritual is necessary because a tertön's successor has a different mind than the tertön. The transmission must be presented in a formal way so that the lineage can be passed on properly. Learning this helped me understand why the Sakyong had to write an empowerment for the *Werma Sadhana*, and why His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche wrote an empowerment for the *Sadhana Of Mahamudra*. These two traditions are now preserved for future generations, much like the traditions that have been preserved in the Rinchen Terdzö.

During a final meeting, the Sakyong said it would be impossible to tell anyone what happened during the Rinchen Terdzö. As I write this I have to laugh because I spent three and a half months in India trying every day to tell people what happened. It was an extraordinary

event, and it is my aspiration that the Rinchen Terdzö will be offered many times in the West, starting in the not-too-distant future. After spending a few days in Orissa and wondering whether I would be bored during the seemingly endless weeks of empowerments, I noticed that the environment was not that different from a dathün or sesshin. All one had to do was open up, relax, and be curious. As both the Sakyong and Jigme Rinpoche said at different times in Orissa, “Who wouldn’t want to do this?”

## The Rinchen Terdzö In Context

Terma teachings are hidden so that they can be revealed in a future time and context when they will be needed most, when beings will be most capable of using them. Strictly speaking, they are a unique feature of the Tibetan tradition, and in particular of the Nyingma lineage. Terma practices tend to be pithy, effective, and easier to use than their counterpart, the teachings of the *kama*. *Ka* means command or word in the honorific sense and implies the original spoken



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

teachings of the Buddha. The kama are the earliest teachings that came to Tibet from India and have been handed down orally since that time. While the kama practices are still preserved at some monasteries, they are lengthy and complex. Most of the Nyingma practices being done today are based on termas. Termas are a timely and energetic means to present the dharma and achieve realization.

The Rinchen Terdzö is transmitted by means of two principle methods, the empowerment and the reading transmission. The sequence of empowerments and reading transmissions in the Rinchen Terdzö presents a systematic journey through mahayoga, anuyoga, and atiyoga, which are the three uppermost divisions of the vajrayana path in the context of Nyingma practice. In its most expanded form, the Rinchen Terdzö contains around 900 empowerments and represents the lineages of well over a hundred tertöns and visionaries. Whether a realized lineage holder or an ordinary practitioner receives the Rinchen Terdzö, the vajrayana teachings and practices presented in the collection are invaluable.

In most cases, different teachers perform the empowerment and reading transmission of the Rinchen Terdzö. The reading transmission includes the ‘small letters’ or notes for the practices, the instructional manuals, the life stories the tertöns and visionaries who discovered the termas, and the life stories of Padmasambhava. While not essential for personal practice, the reading transmission is necessary for those who are responsible for bringing the complete

transmission to future generations. More than half the Rinchen Terdzö is read aloud during the lung. The rest is read during the empowerments.

There are two types of recipients for the Rinchen Terdzö. The first type is someone given the responsibility, at least potentially, of carrying the transmission of the Rinchen Terdzö forward and bestowing it on the next generation of teachers. At any Rinchen Terdzö empowerment, one or more of this type of recipient is enthroned as a lineage holder and given the direct responsibility to carry the transmission forward. The second type of recipient is the general practitioner, someone who receives the practices of the Rinchen Terdzö, but not the responsibility to carry the lineage forward. Some people in this group intend to practice at least some of the traditions in the collection; others receive the Rinchen Terdzö purely as a blessing without any intention to do the practices. For all recipients, the teachings and practices of the Rinchen Terdzö are planted as seeds to be ripened later, either in this or a future life. In a way, this is the main blessing of any empowerment—one is receiving the seeds of wisdom. These seeds are meant to help ripen us as genuine practitioners.

### The Origin And Lineage Of Termas

Sometimes we say that the tertön is the source of a terma, meaning that they were the accomplished teacher who found a terma that had been hidden by Padmasambhava or another realized being. We can also say, for example, that Padmasambhava was the source of a terma, meaning that he created a terma that a tertön found later on. Padmasambhava's termas were in turn based on what he received from his own teachers in a lineage that eventually traces itself back to non-human origins. Vajrasattva, who is seen as the embodiment of all the buddhas, and the bodhisattva Vajrapani are transcendent beings that taught the mahayoga, anuyoga, and atiyoga to fully realized human beings like Garab Dorje, the first human holder of the atiyoga lineage. The lineage traces itself back even further, from Vajrasattva and Vajrapani to the most primordial expression of enlightenment, Samantabhadra Buddha, who is also the embodiment of our own fully realized buddha nature.

If we look at the journey of the teachings coming from Samantabhadra to the tertön, it can be divided into three major sections. It starts with *The Mind Lineage Of The Victorious Ones*, which is the transmission of the teachings from Samantabhadra to an already enlightened retinue of buddhas. Next comes *The Symbolic Lineage Of The Vidyadharas*, which is the transmission of the teachings from transcendent beings like Vajrasattva to fully realized human beings like Garab Dorje and other highly realized figures early in the lineage. Finally, there is *The Oral Lineage Of Ordinary Beings*, which starts from Padmasambhava and his contemporaries, Vimalamitra and Vairochana, and continues down to our own teachers in the present day. These three stages are called *The Three Lineages*, and they are used to trace the



origins of the Nyingma inner tantras, and particularly the dzogchen teachings.

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, in his book *Crazy Wisdom*, shows how The Three Lineages relate to the personal relationship that we might have with our own teacher. The *oral lineage* refers to how we begin to experience the truth of the teachings through words and techniques. The *symbolic lineage* refers to the relative level of what Trungpa Rinpoche called ‘crazy wisdom’,

how the teacher can without effort create incidents and environmental chaos that communicate the meaning or experience of awakening in the student’s life and mind. The *mind lineage* refers to an atmosphere of mutual understanding, where the meaning of the dharma is understood nakedly without language, symbolism, or incident.



Padmasambhava

Photograph by Walker Blaine

The idea to conceal the termas arose in the 8th century when Padmasambhava made many specific predictions about the eventual decline of the teachings in Tibet. King Trisong Detsen and others asked what could be done, and Padmasambhava replied that the only thing to do was to preserve the teachings and sacred objects for people to recover later on, when human dignity and understanding were weakening. In that way, the tradition could be revitalized; the teachings could remain fresh by making an immediate and intimate connection to Padmasambhava and other masters through the direct link of a tertön’s mindstream.

Padmasambhava hid most of the termas with the help of Yeshe Tsogyal, who was his main disciple and Tibetan consort. The Rinchen Terdzö also contains termas from the Indian master Vimalamitra, and the great translator, Vairochana. They were contemporaries of Padmasambhava and key figures in firmly establishing the Buddhist teachings in Tibet. The termas were hidden in the minds of realized disciples, in space, and in worldly places like rocks, earth, trees, and buildings. When the rebirths of the realized disciples of Padmasambhava, Vairochana, and Vimalamitra discovered the termas in later centuries, it was accomplished through the interdependence of three things: the terma (or its location, in the case of a physical object) being hidden by Padmasambhava in the tertön’s wisdom mind, Padmasambhava’s powerful aspiration-prophecy that the terma be recovered by the tertön in the future, and the help of the deities who promised to protect the termas.

Some of the texts in the Rinchen Terdzö are re-discovered termas or *yangter*. Yangter are termas that were found, re-hidden, and discovered anew by an even later tertön. This might

happen if the conditions were not right for a particular terma to be shared at the time of its discovery. Other texts in the collection are pure visions (Tib. *dagnang*), teachings given directly by a deity, such as Tara, to a human disciple. A pure vision is different from a terma, which is a teaching hidden by a realized teacher in an earlier era to be discovered later. There is even one practice that is neither a terma nor a pure vision, the fasting practice of *Nyung Nay*, which Jamgön Kongtrül felt was important enough to be included in the Rinchen Terdzö.

Three tertöns seem particularly important in the context of the Rinchen Terdzö because of their efforts to preserve terma lineages for future generations. The first is Minling Terchen, also known as Terdak Lingpa, who compiled *The Wish-Fulfilling Vase*, a 17th century collection of essential termas that became one of the seeds of the Rinchen Terdzö. The second important figure is Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, who had the initial inspiration for the Rinchen Terdzö, and was able to pass on a large number of terma lineages, both his own and those of other tertöns, to Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye. Finally, there is Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye himself, whose efforts to preserve the terma teachings are almost unimaginable.

It is impossible to know the complete intention of Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye when he decided to create the Rinchen Terdzö. Because of Padmasambhava's prophecies that the dharma would suffer a great setback in Tibet during the 20th century, it is conceivable that the five major collections of texts gathered by Jamgön Kongtrül (the Rinchen Terdzö being just one of these) were created in part so that the teachings would not be lost during the difficult times that continue to threaten the continuity of the teachings in our era. Whatever the reason, the Rinchen Terdzö provides a major link to many extraordinary practice traditions that strengthened not only the Nyingma, but all lineages from the 11th century onward. It is a great wonder that the transmission continues. It is said that only one complete copy of the final edited version of the Rinchen Terdzö made it out of Tibet during the Cultural Revolution. There is nothing else like it in the Buddhist world.

### Coming Forward Into Our Time

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche became a lineage holder of the Rinchen Terdzö when he was twelve years old. It was not unusual for a young lama to be given such a huge responsibility, particularly a lama like the Vidyadhara, who was a *tülku* (reincarnate teacher), a tertön, in training to become a *khenpo* (a master of studies), a regional political leader, and extraordinarily brilliant by all accounts. However, what Tibetans count as more amazing, according to Karma Senge Rinpoche, is that Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche was able to turn around and bestow the Rinchen Terdzö at Drölma Lhakang when he was just fourteen. Bestowing the Rinchen Terdzö takes a continual effort from long before dawn until way past dusk, for three to six months. Even for an adult, giving the Rinchen Terdzö is a great



accomplishment. Four years after first bestowing the Rinchen Terdzö, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche offered it again at Yak Gumpa.

If one reads Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's book, *Born In Tibet*, it is clear that the Rinchen Terdzö and the world of terma were major features of the Vidyadhara's youth and development. His guru at Surmang, Rolpe Dorje Rinpoche, was a tertön. When all the time for training, preparations, the empowerments, and so forth are taken into account, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's involvement with the Rinchen Terdzö took up nearly two years of his life in Tibet. Practices in the collection were a presence in his experience from an early age. *The Blazing Jewel Of Sovereignty*, one of the final empowerments in the Rinchen Terdzö and the ritual used in Shambhala to enthrone a Sakyong, was first

bestowed on Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche at the age of eight by His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. Vajrakilaya practice, at least sixteen forms of which are contained in the collection, continues to be performed at Surmang Dütsi Til. In particular, the Longchen Nyingtik, the most popular terma in Tibet, became the Vidyadhara's main practice when he was twelve years old.

As it is customary that at least one recipient at a Rinchen Terdzö be named as a lineage holder with the responsibility to bestow the transmission on the next generation, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche made His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche the principle lineage holder during the Rinchen Terdzö at Yak Gumpa. While the head of the monastery, Yak Tülku Rinpoche, was the sponsor for that particular Rinchen Terdzö, Namkha Drimed Rinpoche was the highest-ranking lama present. In that time without electric lights and microphones, His Eminence sat just to the right of the Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's throne, within arm's reach, in order to hear and receive all the empowerments.

Namkha Drimed Rinpoche comes from a lay family lineage, the Ripa, which means 'one of the mountains'. The Ripa were named for the 17th century siddha, Ripa Pema Deje Rolpa. After many years of practicing in mountain retreats, Ripa Pema Deje Rolpa established a



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

monastic seat at Nyima Puk in Kham, eastern Tibet. He named it Rigon Tashi Choeling. Until that time, the family lineage had been Barom Kagyü, one of the eight lesser lineages of the Kagyü tradition. However, Ripa Pema Deje Rolpa was recognized as the speech emanation of Taksham Nuden Dorje, a famous tertön some of whose termas are included in the Rinchen Terdzö. Though nearly 20 volumes of Taksham Nuden Dorje's work remain untranslated, his terma-biographies of Padmasambhava's two principle consorts, Yeshe Tsogyal and Mandarava, are already well known translations in the West. After Pema Deje Rolpa, the Ripa lineage gradually became more Nyingma in orientation.

Rigon Tashi Choeling and Surmang Dütsi Til are relatively close to each other in the Kham-Nangchen region of eastern Tibet. Namkha Drimed Rinpoche's father, Drubwang Jigme Tsewang Chokdrub, was a student of the 10th Trungpa, Chökyi Nyinche and the two would teach in each other's districts. At some point, the 10th Trungpa had the wish to receive the Rinchen Terdzö from Jigme Tsewang Chokdrub, but the wish was never fulfilled because Namkha Rinpoche's father was ill at the time the Rinchen Terdzö could have been bestowed. Knowing of the 10th Trungpa's aspiration, Namkha Drimed Rinpoche felt it was very important for him to receive the empowerment from 11th Trungpa, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. When he heard that the Rinchen Terdzö was to be offered at Yak Gompa, he made every effort to attend the empowerments.

It continues to amaze me that His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche, the last remaining holder of the Vidyadhara's lineage of the Rinchen Terdzö, was able to pass the transmission on to Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. During this fragile time in the world, the Rinchen Terdzö's practices and teachings are important for the continuity and strength of the terma tradition as well as the continuity of Buddhism in general. As the weeks went by in Orissa, it became increasingly clear that the Rinchen Terdzö was also important to the vision of Shambhala and the family lineage established by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. It is my hope that the remainder of this book will begin to convey why the Rinchen Terdzö is so important and pave the way for the Rinchen Terdzö to become more widely known and cherished in the modern world.

### Before Starting In

Here are some final notes to help readers who are new to descriptions of empowerments, deities, and other elements of vajrayana practice. While these remarks will make things a little clearer, having a book with a good glossary will make reading this book easier. There's a short list of readings at the end of this section to fill things out.

In part, the blog was written to show how the practices of the Rinchen Terdzö fit into the

bigger picture of the transmission of the dharma, and the smaller picture of what the practices mean for individual practitioner. There was a lot of information to pass on. I did my best to give a good presentation, but undoubtedly I made mistakes. I am sorry for any errors, and I ask you to bear with my ignorance. The event was a big learning process for everyone.

### **New Terms, Titles, And Editorial Changes**

Sanskrit and Tibetan terms are presented in italics the first time they are used. The titles of books and liturgies are also italicized, with the exception of 'Rinchen Terdzö'. The names of famous terma cycles and practices were left unitalicized for easier reading. Besides trimming the blog entries, one of the main things I changed was the tense of the writing. In most cases, the writing has been altered to reflect that the Rinchen Terdzö has ended. While Tibetan words like *tülku* and *chö* are spelled according to convention, Tibetan institutional and personal names have been left the way the individual or institution spells them. Because of time constraints, and because most readers will possess a digital copy of this document, a formal index of this book has not been created.

### **Symbolism And Deities**

The empowerments in the Rinchen Terdzö involved a variety of rituals and symbolism. What is most important about the rituals, music, symbolic gestures, paintings, and so forth is what's behind them. In each case, the symbols of the transmissions differ, but in all cases they point to our basic goodness, our buddha nature. That is what the student is being helped to recognize throughout all the empowerments and reading transmissions presented in the Rinchen Terdzö. Behind all the rituals is the mind of wisdom that we all possess and strive to meet directly. The rituals are meant to help us understand what is behind or beyond the words.

### **Cultural Connections And Generosity**

One important aspect of the Rinchen Terdzö blog was the picture it gave of the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo's life in the Tibetan world. Their Majesties' life in Asia is different than the one we see in the West. The Sakyong asked me to give a sense of his experience in the East along with giving a broader picture of Tibetan culture and Asian dharmic life in general. Because of the length of the Rinchen Terdzö, it was possible to provide an extended picture of interrelationship between Tibetan and Shambhalian community life and practice.

I also wrote about the cycle of generosity in the Buddhist world. Generosity was a big theme at the Rinchen Terdzö because so many offerings were made each the day during the event. The main individual sponsors for the Rinchen Terdzö were the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo. At the same time, the Sakyong wanted people in the Shambhala community to be

## THE GREAT RIVER OF BLESSINGS

able to make individual and center-by-center offerings to the Rinchen Terdzö in order to make personal connections with what was happening. While a few donors easily could have sponsored the entire event, the Sakyong wanted the Rinchen Terdzö to be something everyone had a chance to share in making happen.

Having travelled in India, Nepal, and Tibet, I have often witnessed the style of generosity the Sakyong was encouraging. For example, pilgrims in Tibet will make offerings at each sacred place they visit in order to connect themselves with the blessings of the place and whatever is happening there. Even before the start of the Rinchen Terdzö, I witnessed this cycle of generosity happening in Orissa. Tibetans who visited the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo would offer a few rupees and maybe some fruit, eggs, or orange soda. Usually, it didn't seem like a lot of money was offered. Making a link with something positive was the point.

### Supplementary Readings

During the Rinchen Terdzö, the Sakyong asked that I provide the names of books that would make it easier to follow what happened in India. Below is a list of texts with explanations and histories that may be useful or inspiring while reading. A long list of resources used in writing the blog is provided in the appendix.

*The Nyingma School Of Tibetan Buddhism, It's Fundamentals & History* by Dudjom Rinpoche

*The Autobiography Of Jamgön Kongtrül* by Richard Barron

*Masters Of Meditation And Miracles* by Tulku Thondup

*Hidden Teachings Of Tibet* by Tulku Thondup

*The Lotus Born* by Yeshe Tsogyal

*The Life Of Chogyur Lingpa* by Orgyen Tobgyal Rinpoche

*Born In Tibet* by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche

*Blazing Splendor* by Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche

*Journey Without Goal* by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche

*The Lion's Roar: An Introduction To Tantra* by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche

For those who have attended vajrayana seminary, the transcripts with general information most related to the Rinchen Terdzö are the years: 1973, 1974, 1975, 1996, and 1999.

## GETTING THERE, WAITING TO BEGIN

The First Chaos

November 29th



Photograph by Benny Fong

Patricia<sup>1</sup> and I arrived in New Delhi at five o'clock in the morning, well rested, and surprisingly awake after the eight-hour flight from London. Neither of us had slept more than six hours in two days. We had the strange luck to be upgraded to first class for no apparent reason and so the flight from London to New Delhi had been quite enjoyable.

After making it through passport control with a large crowd of fellow travelers—tall and strong Sikh men with thick blue turbans, Indian women in saris or in t-shirts and jeans, devout Muslim men with trimmed beards and proper pants and tunics—we eventually located the last of our bags. Two of our suitcases had found their way from the carousel to rows of standing luggage without our knowing. We changed money at a 24-hour exchange in the airport and received an inch thick stack of 100 rupee notes stapled together into a block. I asked one of the tellers what would be a good tip to give someone asking to wheel our bags to the car. With a somewhat mischievous smile, the teller recommended 100 rupees. That would be about two dollars. He added that 50 rupees were enough to get a good cup of tea.

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<sup>1</sup> Patricia Kirigin is a member of the Nalanda Translation Committee and my girlfriend. We live in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Since we had asked our bed and breakfast, Likir House, to send a car to the airport, we were on the road in remarkably good time. As we drove through the early morning traffic toward the city I remarked, “They don’t know how good they’ve got it,” meaning people in the West who’ve never been to places like Delhi. It was shocking to enter an area of pollution so intense that you could feel dust on your teeth within minutes of getting off the plane, even indoors. The dust, electric lights over the highway, and pre-dawn fog created a yellowed atmosphere where light seemed to hang physically in the air.

On the highway into the city, we saw all sorts of new and used vehicles driving alongside men wheeling pushcarts loaded high with long bamboo poles. Foot traffic on the highway blacktop also included tribal women dressed in worn-out colored shawls and thick silver ankle bracelets. Seemingly everywhere there was dirt, garbage, and a weird mixture of poverty and rampant advertising surrounding new and decaying modern buildings that were often covered with a thin layer of powder. The sense of chaos was increased by Asia’s free-form driving style, one that communicates oncoming turns by beeping and small swerves to indicate one’s future intentions.

After settling into our room at the Likir House, we were surprised to meet our friend Tharpa Chödrön, a long-time student of the Vidyadhara and seasoned Asia traveler. She had been staying at the guesthouse for a few days and was trying to get a room for the wonderful thangka painter, Noedup Rongae. During breakfast, Tharpa and some students of Lama Palden (an excellent Western teacher from the Bay Area) filled us in on the main dharmic event of the week in Delhi, His Eminence Tai Situ Rinpoche’s teachings on the Samantabhadra prayer.

Likir House is in a relatively quiet neighborhood whose backstreets bustle with western-style shops, typical Indian businesses, and street bazaars. On the more commercial avenues, it was possible to find establishments like mountain bike stores near Western-style coffee bars, and second-hand mobile phone dealers next to ma-and-pa tailor shops. Here and there we saw corn-roasting street vendors, beggar girls ready to pull on our sleeves, and curious schoolchildren eager to ask, “Hello, where are you from?” We were told it was a slow day because of an oncoming national election. After a nap, we walked around the neighborhood and ordered some makhani dhal, nan, palak panir, and aloo gobi from a nearby hotel.

### Noedup Rongae And The Shambhala Lineage Tree Thangka November 30th

Our friends from Halifax, Anky Aarts and Kristine McKutcheon, arrived at the Likir House late last night. The four of us had arranged to travel the rest of the way to the Rinchen Terdzö together, and it was nice to have things finally falling into place. We enjoyed breakfast with

Noedup Rongae, his nephew, and a monk who'd come down with them from Kullu, a Himalayan town many hours' drive north of Delhi. Noedup is one of the great treasures in the Shambhala community. His paintings are among the finest contemporary thangkas I have ever seen. There is life, dignity, and detail to everything Noedup paints. His understanding of dharma together with his seamless devotion to the Vidyadhara and Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche is humbling and inspiring.

The reason Noedup made the long journey to Delhi was to show Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche the progress on the Shambhala lineage tree thangka. After coffee, toast, and omelets, we went up to Noedup's room adjacent to the rooftop terrace. He unfurled the six-foot wide sketch of the thangka across two beds. It turned out to be only the top half of the image because the lower half of the sketches remained in Kullu. It was affixed to a piece of plywood too large to travel with. The finished thangka will be six feet wide and nine feet tall.

A lineage tree depicts all the teachers and deities of a tradition in a tree or in the sky surrounding a central figure that is the embodiment of them all. In the center of the Shambhala lineage tree is the Primordial Rigden, the embodiment of the Great Eastern Sun, the full manifestation of our inherent wisdom. The Primordial Rigden in the center of Noedup's sketch was regal, dignified, and peaceful. Surrounding him were many, many deities, notably all the kings and queens of Shambhala seated in pairs. In the sky above the tree were the great teachers of India and Tibet like Padmasambhava, Marpa, and Yeshe Tsogyal, and the great ancestral rulers such as the Indian Dharmaraja Ashoka and the Tibetan King Trisong Detsen. Below the Primordial Rigden, in the section that remained in Kullu, were the *yidams*, or meditation deities, and the deities that protect the teachings. Below them, at the very base of the tree, Asian and Western students, along with gods and animals, prostrated and paid homage to the Primordial Rigden and the lineage. The balance of male and female teachers and deities in the assembly was striking. It was the most unified blend of masculine and feminine I've ever seen in a lineage thangka.

Noedup told us about coincidences that were pushing the thangka forward and giving him the sense that no matter what, this thangka must be finished. One coincidence was the fact that he was able to get three of the most in-demand artists from Tibet to work on the preliminary sketches with him. He explained that because they were so sought after all over Asia it was hard to get their help on any project. However, although they'd planned to stay only a week with Noedup, they became so inspired by the Shambhala lineage tree that they extended their visit to three months in order to sketch the full thangka with him.

Another coincidence concerned a series of individual thangkas of the Rigden Kings made by the 8th Tai Situ Chökyi Jungne (1700-1774). These paintings were thought to be among the

most authoritative images of the Rigdens, but they were believed lost during the Chinese invasion of Tibet. Noedup possessed a set of instructions on how to paint the images, but he had never seen the paintings themselves. The instructions were written by the Nyingma master, Rigdzin Kathok Tsewang Norbu (1698-1775), who was a guru of Tai Situ Chökyi Jungne, but questions remained about the specific visual details that the words of the instructions could not express. Noedup mentioned this dilemma to His Holiness 17th Karmapa who surprised Noedup with professional photos of the thangkas, which had only recently emerged from hiding in Tibet. Noedup was able to share the instructional text with the Karmapa, a text that the Karmapa had never seen before.

Because the Shambhala lineage thangka will require a great deal of effort to complete, Noedup invented a barrel shaped canvas stretcher that enables six people to work on a thangka simultaneously without the movement of brush-strokes affecting one another's section of the painting. He said nothing like it had been used before. Noedup was sparking humor and delight every time he spoke about the thangka. Because of his inspiration and many coincidences, Noedup feels he has no choice but to bring this project to completion. If you wish to contribute towards a project that will be seen and used by many generations of dharma practitioners to come, please visit:

<https://www.shambhala.org/giving/ourfuture.php>

### New Delhi In A Tuk-Tuk

November 30th

After breakfast with Noedup, we went to a small, middle-class shopping district a kilometer or two from the hotel. We rode there in a tuk-tuk, a natural gas powered trike with room for three people to sit hip to hip in a canvas-covered booth slightly wider than a loveseat. Tuk-tuks are all over Delhi, mixing freely with the cars, trucks, motorcycles, horse carts, elephants, busses, and the rest of the undulating mass of self-monitoring movement that stretches itself over every street and alley in the city.

At each major traffic light we were invited to purchase things like fistfuls of car-lighter cell phone chargers or copies of Vogue magazine. One boy pushed his arms over the railing of the windowless tuk-tuk and placed plastic-wrapped copies of current best sellers in our laps. We silently shook our heads as he dropped his asking price by seventy-five percent. This determined, bright-eyed salesman caught up to us at the next traffic light and resumed his pitch, this time touching the corner of a book to my heart over and over again.

The shopping trip had the flavor of being on a low-end amusement park—sort of fun and slightly out of sync. It brought a heightened sense of illusion and improbability to our journey.



As we turned on one street, we noticed a family of four relaxedly riding beside us on a 150 cc motorcycle. The mother sat sidesaddle as if watching TV. A toddler was sandwiched her and the father, who was driving. In front of him sat a baby, perched upright on the gas tank.

We purchased supplies like a hot water kettle and luggage locks at a cluster of shops that formed an impromptu mall. Through a gap in a row of billboards sandwiched between two small office buildings, we spotted a group of women wearing orange and purple saris and dirty, sparkle-fringed headscarves. They were in a deep, wide ditch, digging the foundation of a new building by hand. The brown sandy earth was being hauled out of the lot with the help of an army of pack-laden donkeys. Besides donkeys, we sighted an elephant, horses, various dogs, cows, squirrels, pigeons, hawks, and a fat nursing dachshund during our stay in Delhi.

## The Flight To Bhubaneswar

December 1st

We flew to Bhubaneswar today. At the airport we discovered we were on the same flight as Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, the Sakyong Wangmo, Semo Pede, Lama Gyurme Dorje (the Sakyong's half-brother), Kaling (the Sakyong Wangmo's friend and kusung), and the rest of the group coming from Shambhala to attend the entire event—kusungs Mark Whaley, Christoph Schönherr, Esther Fraund, and Craig Mollins, and the *machen* (head cook) Marvin Robinson. The flight was peaceful and the food was great. Airlines in India generally serve really good food. This time it was curries, steaming chapattis, white rice, and makhani dhal.

The Sakyong, Sakyong Wangmo, and their entourage were greeted at the Bhubaneswar airport by Jigme Rinpoche, along with other members of the Ripa family and representatives from Rigon Thupten Mindrolling. Many khatas, smiles, hugs, and laughter were exchanged at baggage claim. After the luggage had been properly stowed in a line of cars and jeeps, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, Jigme Rinpoche, and their party left in a motorcade to make the drive halfway to monastery before nightfall.

Anky, Kristine, Patricia, and I found a couple taxis and drove into the city for the night. We checked in the Ginger Hotel, which had been highly recommended by Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche. The rooms were very clean, mosquitoless, and had a spare, Northern European appeal. The Ginger Hotel had a modest coffee shop that offered lattes for about a dollar, but no substantial food. So we visited the hotel next door. They offered a delicious dinner menu. This included a complementary serving of ice cream, which was greatly appreciated after the heat we encountered on the tarmac, 31 Celsius (87 Fahrenheit). After dinner, we sorted through the snacks and provisions that Kristine had purchased for everyone while she was shopping in the city during the afternoon.

## The Road To Chandragiri

December 2nd



Photograph by Benny Fong

Today we drove from Bhubaneswar to the monastery, Rigon Thupten Mindrolling. It was a long drive that lasted seven hours, from mid-morning until after dark. It started with our driver being late. Even after he arrived, he was hard to locate at the busy hotel because he spoke no English. When we finally met the driver, his mobile phone malfunctioned and prevented him from

answering any calls. By that point his boss had started frantically telephoning him, trying to put him in touch with us. A flurry of calls jingled in and out of his phone while Kristine, Anky, Patricia, two hotel clerks, and I jammed a patchwork of baggage into the back of the Tata Sumo truck that would take us southward.

Bhubaneswar is a typical mid-sized Indian city filled with people and businesses pressed together into a colorful mosaic at every downtown corner. We were soon on the highway headed south, passing truck stops thick with cheap hotels, stone carving businesses, and roadside Hindu temples. One temple had a twelve-foot high entry archway that was shaped like the mouth of a wrathful, blue-faced god, a man with a black moustache, sharp white teeth, and bulging eyes.

Palm trees and simple farms with high rounded piles of hay soon predominated the view on either side of the highway. The air was hot and hazy, but not as densely polluted as it was in Delhi. The farms in this region were unlike their counterparts in North America's mid-West. All the farmland we saw was meticulously planted, tended, and harvested by hand. There was no farm equipment anywhere in sight. Women in dirty saris and men in sleeveless shirts squatted and worked in the hot sun. People carried bundles of straw on their heads, and the active highway lanes were sometimes used for drying grain.

As we moved further south, short steep hills jutted up amidst the fields, towns, and tiny villages. No hill was more than five hundred feet high; most were well-vegetated humps, shaped like walnut halves rising here and there in the distance on either side of the highway. White sea birds, like small egrets, occasionally flew up from the dark marshes, and sometimes perched themselves on the backs of domesticated black water buffalos that had found their way into cool streams or muddy fields near the road.

At first, the highways were flat and smooth. They soon gave way to more rough and

battered blacktop. By Berampur, the last major town on the way to the monastery, the road became unpredictable with potholes and sections of dirt. Even on the paved roads, cars and trucks sometimes drove towards us on our own side of the highway even though the opposite lane seemed to be open. Sometimes there was only one dirt lane and the occasional oncoming vehicle pulled aside for us to get by.

At the very end of the afternoon we entered Chandragiri district, somewhere inside of which was the monastery and five Tibetan camps. Kristine, who had been at the Indian wedding of the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo, said we were starting to get close because we had finally started driving up the low ridgeline that had supplanted the round hills to the west. At one point, I noticed we were driving stretches without seeing people or domestic animals—an oddity in India. By then, the road was mostly unpaved and surrounded by patches of forest. Because our location was far from city or town, and because it was getting dark, our driver began regularly asking people for directions. One never wants to get lost in India, especially at night in an unfamiliar region. He was slightly freaked out.

After being waved at by two Tibetan kids on a motorcycle, we knew we were close. We soon entered the first of the five Tibetan camps and were given directions to the monastery. A few people emphatically pointed the driver onto a dirt road that took us through a five-minute stretch of brush that rose high above our line of vision. This made the driver even more anxious, but we got to the monastery ten minutes later and learned we'd been sent on the short cut.

It was dark when finally we rolled into a small parking lot by the monastery. Sonam Palmo, a kind and elegant Tibetan woman in a grey chuba, was waiting to greet us. She was in charge of transportation and hospitality for Western guests. A troop of red-robed, teen-aged monks hauled our baggage into the monastery guesthouse. Soon we were enjoying rice, warm dhal, and panir for dinner, and puzzling over how safe it was to eat the hot green chilies. Pema, a cook from a Tibetan camp in North India, remarked that this place was 'remote'.

## Waiting To Begin

December 3rd

Rigon Thupten Mindrolling sits on a plateau dotted with steeply rounded, rocky green hills. As you enter the main monastery compound, you walk into a courtyard nearly the size of a city block. The courtyard is framed on either side by two-story residential buildings, white with red trim. To the right and left are beautiful little gardens of hand-trimmed grass, flowers, and small trees. Ahead, in front of the new main temple, there is a large square courtyard used for lama dances and other public events. The second floor of the monastic residences has a running balcony, which gives access to its long rows of bedrooms. Many of the Western

students—Ripa and Shambhala sangha members—were housed in the rooms at the far end of the courtyard facing the monastery. These rooms were designated a hostel and were separated from the monastery for the duration of the Rinchen Terdzö.

Kristine, Anky, Patricia, and I went pay a visit to His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche this the morning. After offering him khatas, we chatted for a few minutes. His Eminence was very well, jovial, and warm. Earlier we'd met the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo in the main monastery courtyard. They'd come from their suite at the Ripa Ladrang (the Ripa family compound near the monastery), in order to see how the preparations for the Rinchen Terdzö were proceeding. Later in the afternoon Kristine, Anky, Patricia, and I had tea with Kaling, the Sakyong Wangmo's good friend and attendant. Her family compound was in a cool grove of trees down the street from the Ripa Ladrang. Several of Kaling's relatives had arrived recently, and had travelled a day or more's journey from other parts of India to attend the Rinchen Terdzö. As we sat down for tea, some of Kaling's family went to visit a stupa in a nearby camp—a mini pilgrimage before the main event began. After tea we returned to the guesthouse to unpack and prepare for the start of the program.

### A Day Of Meetings

December 4th

Anywhere we went today, there was activity in preparation for the Rinchen Terdzö. Monks bustled around with all manner of objects, from small piles of construction materials to enormous brocade couches. It had the feel of the start of a major program at a center in the West, only a lot bigger. During the day, I spent a lot of time figuring out how to use the satellite internet antenna that would send the blog to readers in the West and the East. After the blog was over I discovered we had followers on every continent except Antarctica.

In the morning, Patricia and I met with the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo at their suite in the Ripa Ladrang. The Sakyong was staying there until the dignitaries' rooms in the main temple were ready. Later in the day, we enjoyed a long chat with Jigme Rinpoche, who gave a wonderful overview of the Rinchen Terdzö including more information about the Vidyadhara. Contents of these and other interviews appear later in this book.

## THE RINCHEN TERDZÖ: THE EMPOWERMENTS OF MAHAYOGA



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

The mahayoga empowerments were divided in two major parts, called the tantra section and the sadhana section. The divisions of the tantra section and sadhana section come from the main divisions of the kama mahayoga teachings that the mahayoga termas are connected with. Termas, as revitalizations of vajrayana practice, connect with elements in the Indian

vajrayana tradition. The tantra section termas are connected to the practices and teachings drawn from the mahayoga tantras that form the basis of vajrayana study and practice in the Nyingma. The tantras are the root texts of the Indian vajrayana tradition. The sadhana section termas are related to the *Eight Logos*, the main group of Indian sadhanas that are practiced in the Nyingma mahayoga tradition. The tantra section of the mahayoga was short and lasted about five days; the sadhana section lasted two and a half months. Each section of the Rinchen Terdzö will be described over the course of the empowerments.

The Formal Opening Of The Rinchen Terdzö

December 5th

When the Westerners arrived at the monastery for the formal opening of the Rinchen Terdzö

this afternoon, they found they had their own section on the left side of the room, directly in front of the shrine that had been set up specifically for the abhishekas. We were remarkably close to the action. Behind the shrine, running the entire width of the room, was a wide black marble stage. In the center of the stage stood Namkha Drimed Rinpoche's high throne. This was the seat from which His Eminence bestowed the empowerments over the next three months. To the right of that, facing His Eminence was the Sakyong's seat, a very low throne.

Behind the Sakyong's place on the stage was the seating for the Ripa family already in Orissa: Jigme Rinpoche, Lhunpo Rinpoche, the Sakyong Wangmo, His Eminence's wife, Khandro Chime, the *Semos* (the daughters of His Eminence), Lhunpo Rinpoche's wife, (also called Khandro Chime), Tulku Karma Shedrup (His Eminence's brother), and some of the Ripa family cousins. Behind Namkha Drimed Rinpoche stood a towering *rupa* (statue) of Buddha Shakyamuni, 10 times bigger than life. To the Buddha's left stood white Avalokiteshvara, the embodiment of compassion, in the form that has a thousand arms and an eye gazing out from each palm. To Shakyamuni's right sat a huge, gold skinned statue of Padmasambhava.

His Eminence entered the room with a procession of gyalings, and was followed by the Sakyong and the rest the dignitaries. Then His Eminence sat down and gave a brief explanation of the lineage of transmission of the Rinchen Terdzö from Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye to himself. He spoke about the auspiciousness of the situation for the monastic and lay community, and said it was extremely good fortune that the monastery was about to open and at the same time it was hosting the Rinchen Terdzö, the collection of all the main termas in the Nyingma lineage. For a Nyingma monastery to have the Rinchen Terdzö be the first event in its new main shrine room is an extraordinary blessing.

After the traditional offerings and request for teachings, the abhishekas started immediately and we were in the first major section of the collection, the mahayoga, almost without realizing it. There were two empowerments—or rather, one and a half – bestowed after the opening talk. The first was an empowerment of Vajrasattva, who is known as the embodiment of all deities, all the buddhas. Minling Terchen, the very influential teacher and prolific tertön, discovered the terma for this particular Vajrasattva empowerment. In the 17th century, he and his brother, Lochen Dharma Shri, assembled the two-volume collection of termas called *The Wish-Fulfilling Vase* that became the seed for the Rinchen Terdzö. Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye fittingly chose this empowerment this empowerment to commence the Rinchen Terdzö.

The 'half abhisheka' was a preliminary empowerment for a peaceful and wrathful deity practice by Karma Lingpa. Karma Lingpa is famous in the West for his book, *The Tibetan Book Of The Dead*. A preliminary empowerment is a feature of some elaborate abhishekas. Often it

will happen one day with the main empowerment rituals following on the next day. Preliminary empowerments focus on renewing vows, creating harmonious conditions for receiving empowerments, and clearing away obstacles. Often one is asked to look at one's dreams for auspicious signs the night before the main empowerment is given.

In addition to the empowerments today, His Eminence read several important instructions (Tib. *tri*) on such topics as Vajrasattva, completion stage meditation, and the practices of luminosity, dream, and chöd. All of the tris were authored by Minling Terchen and Lochen Dharma Shri.

## Peaceful And Wrathful Deities

December 6th

Today's empowerments were related to the peaceful and wrathful deities. The cycle of 42 peaceful and 58 wrathful deities practice is called *Shitro* (peaceful-wrathful) in Tibetan. While *Shitro* is a practice in itself, the 100 *Shitro* deities are all embodied in Vajrasattva and correspond to the hundred syllables of the long Vajrasattva mantra. The *Shitro* deities are also a major element in the Nyingma root tantra, the *Guhyagarbha*.



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

Many commentaries are devoted to bringing out the meaning of this tantra, and the *termas* that are related to this tantra are the main focus of the tantra section. Jamgön Mipham (1846-1912) wrote a commentary on *Guhyagarbha* now translated English under the title, *Luminous Essence, A Guide To The Guhyagarbha Tantra*.

Three of today's *Shitro* empowerments were based on the revelations of Karma Lingpa. Karma Lingpa was born in the first half of the 14th century, the child of an accomplished Nyingma master. He started to reveal *termas* about the peaceful and wrathful deities when he was fifteen years old. Today's final empowerment was based on the revelations of a Bön *tertön*, Trangpo Sherab Öser.

Karma Lingpa's most famous text, *The Tibetan Book Of The Dead*, is more properly titled, *The Great Liberation By Hearing During The Intermediate State*. "Intermediate state" is the English for the Tibetan word *bardo* and here it refers specifically to the time when one's life is ending. *The Tibetan Book Of The Dead* is chiefly a series of instructions to be read to someone who is dying in order to help him or her relate to the experience of death in a clear, relaxed, and open state of mind. Having a relaxed mind at the time of death is very important.



The peaceful and wrathful deities are a big part of the experience of dying. It is taught that at the time of death, the mind and body separate and one has internal visions or hallucinations. These visions are the deities. They manifest in the mind, but they are not real. The visions appear at first as peaceful and kind. Later the visions appear in more ferocious and challenging forms. The important point here is that all the deities arise from one's mind, not from outside. If one is confident in this at the time of death, then the peaceful and wrathful appearances become self-liberated—they dissolve into the mind from which they came. If one has trained well in recognizing the self-liberation of thoughts into the mind from which they came, one can attain enlightenment at the time of death.

### Looking Around The Shrine Room

December 6th

The shrine room is huge. After a day of feeling totally overwhelmed I am starting to look around from my seat in the sea of monks. I can't tell you how ornate the space is; there is just so much color and symbolism. Photos and videos will convey something of how alive the wall-to-wall frescos are, how vivid the huge statues make this space. Because the main temple has just been completed, everything sparkles and shines, and because Western construction methods have made the galleries and windows wide and open, there is lots of light.

As I relax, the noise in the shrine room is what gets me. The front section of the assembly—the Sakyong, Jigme Rinpoche, and the rest of the Ripa family on the stage; the front row of distinguished teachers, yogis, khenpos, and monastic officials; the representatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the local community leaders seated near the right side entry to the temple; the Westerners in their section on the other side of the room; and the older monks in between—all the front half of the shrine room is relatively silent. But the back half of the room—from the younger members of the four hundred monastics on back to where many lay people sit in the shrine room and out on the veranda where people camp on rugs with their children—all of that is a constant ocean of sound.

The noise of conversation, kids squealing, the occasional tin cup being dropped on the marble floor by a then startled young monk—are all are taken in stride, thanks to an especially good sound system. The amplifiers boom out Namkha Drimed Rinpoche's powerful speech, punctuated occasionally by drums and the unearthly, shrill harmonies of gyalings, the Tibetan trumpets. It is more than most of us would want to deal with in the West during a talk, empowerment, or dathün. However, the front rows are silent and focused, as are the older monks and more serious lay practitioners dotted throughout the crowd.



## The Reading Transmissions Begin

December 7th



Lhunpo Rinpoche and Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche

Photograph by Walker Blaine

This morning we started the reading transmissions. It was a bit unexpected because last night there was an announcement that would be an empowerment this morning. The shrine room was full at 6:30 A.M. although the crowd appeared to have thinned out slightly from last night. As it turned out, there was no abhisheka, and instead Lhunpo Rinpoche began the lung.

His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche entered the room as we waited for the lung to begin. Instead of taking his seat on the throne center stage, he went off to the right side of the room, behind a large red curtain that now hung in front of the empowerment shrine. Every morning, His Eminence performed all the preliminary liturgies for the empowerments he bestowed in the afternoon. Soon after His Eminence disappeared behind the curtain, Lhunpo Rinpoche took his own place on a low throne placed at the front of the stage. After a brief talk, he began the reading transmissions. Lhunpo Rinpoche's remarks included an explanation of the three oral lineages of the reading transmission that he received. One of them came from Tenga Rinpoche who gave the lung many years ago when the previous Kalu Rinpoche was bestowing the Rinchen Terdzö.

Most mornings I worked on the blog, but it seemed best to attend the first day of the reading transmissions to get the flavor of things. At the start of the session, the Sakyong Wangmo offered a *mandala* on behalf of everyone in the assembly. A mandala offering is symbolic offering of one's whole world. It is created as a visualization in the mind while one simultaneously creates a symbolic arrangement of rice during the recitation of the visualization liturgy. The liturgy describes all of the very best things one could offer in order receive the teachings.

Today's lungs contained histories of Padmasambhava, all the tertöns. Padmasambhava, who firmly established Buddhism in Tibet through his incredible power and insight, continues to inspire many practitioners today, particularly Tibetans. Without him, these teachings and Tibetan culture would not have survived to the present day. The Rinchen Terdzö is a kind of celebration of Padmasambhava and all the termas as well as bringing the teachings forward into the present moment.

## The Rinchen Terdzö And The Vidyadhara

by Acharya Larry Mermelstein

[This article was the first piece of writing from a distinguished Shambhala or Ripa sangha member. Acharya Larry Mermelstein is an early student of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, and the director of the Nalanda Translation Committee in Halifax, Nova Scotia.]

Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, one of the Vidyadhara's close teachers from Tibet, republished the entire Rinchen Terdzö anthology sometime in the 1970s, adding to it somewhat, I believe. He kindly gave a copy of this to the Vidyadhara. Proper cloth wrappings and text labels were sewn for each volume, and Lama Ugyen Shenpen carefully reordered the 111 volumes into the more traditional 63-volume arrangement in order to facilitate the use of its index. Lama Ugyen was very familiar with these texts, as it had been his job to prepare the texts needed each day for his guru, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, during the six-month-long empowerment ceremonies he conferred in Asia, which he did on several occasions.

Sometime after all the texts had been wrapped and shelved nicely in a specially constructed lacquer cabinet in A-Suite, in the sitting room next to his personal office, I remember Rinpoche commenting about how excited he was to have these books so close to him. He exuded what seemed to be a very visceral feeling of gratitude and deep devotion to these particular teachings. Whenever the Vidyadhara left his home in Boulder to teach the three-month Seminary program, he always wanted us to bring the entire Rinchen Terdzö, along with 30-40 other volumes of his Tibetan library, to the Seminary. These filled several large trunks. Simply put, he wanted this collection near to him at all times possible.

## Tea At The Rinchen Terdzö

December 7th

At the start of the third day of the empowerments, the room seemed more crowded. One of the yogis from the front row, a lama in his 40's with a black ponytail, had brought several young nuns and some lay people with him to receive a blessing from His Eminence. A train of red-robed nuns and traditionally dressed lay practitioners stood by the left near the front of the room. The nuns shyly held *khatas* (traditional white offering scarves) to be presented when they met Namkha Drimed Rinpoche. The entire group was visibly nervous about going up to the shrine in front of such a huge assembly before the start of the empowerments. A clear wind of relief swept through them when they learned they had to wait until the four o'clock tea break to make their offerings.

Mid-morning and mid-afternoon tea was a big production. His Eminence and the rest of

the dignitaries were served first. Immediately afterward, dozens of young monks surged through the room to server the rest of us from huge metal kettles that made the smaller monks hunch with the weight of the liquid. Everyone brought his or her own teacup to the empowerments. The monks moved quickly and one-pointedly through the crowd and the tea got served to 800 of us within ten minutes.

On the very first day of the Rinchen Terdzö, the tea was the famous Tibetan butter tea—tea with butter and salt. This beverage is gladly welcomed at high altitudes, but it is a bit strange to drink in 80-degree heat. However, the cook went light on the butter. Yesterday we had sweet chai. The Westerners were hoping chai would be served throughout the Rinchen Terdzö, but today we switched back to butter tea, which left a few uncomfortable stomachs.

Tea usually included a treat, often a yellow bread roll, slightly sweet like cake, but shaped like an uncut hamburger bun. Yesterday, the bun had a dash of sugared mustard jam slipped inside it. A second wave of monks, working in pairs, followed the tea monks and handed the buns out from big baskets. Then, everyone waited for Namkha Drimed to pause the activities so that we could perform a brief offering chant before having the tea.

It was at this point that the little troupe of nuns and lay people got to make their connection with His Eminence. They each went up to his throne with a khata and a small envelope containing a gift of some money. As I mentioned in the introduction, this style of offering seems to be about linking oneself with virtuous activity. Everyone in the group appeared to be happy after their brief visit with Namkha Drimed Rinpoche; it was a relief for the vicarious onlookers to see the group finally get their moment.

A regular feature of teatime was the formal reading of the sponsors of the tea offering. The din in the room dropped down a bit at this point so people could pay more attention to what others in the community were wishing for, who was being specifically practiced for the benefit of, and so on. Traditional aspiration prayers made by the assembly on behalf of the sponsors would then follow this.

In the first days of the empowerments, the tea sponsorship and practice requests seemed to come in turn from the representatives of each of the five Tibetan camps. A little group would walk to a standing microphone facing His Eminence to read a personal aspiration for the longevity of His Eminence and good wishes for the Rinchen Terdzö. Then, the assembly would do its short practice. Finally, the donors would weave through the crowd and offer each member of the monastic assembly a few rupees as a gift.

## Why Now Is The Time For Terma

Remarks By Gyetrul Jigme Rinpoche

Gyetrul Jigme Rinpoche gave the following overview of the meaning and purpose of terma during an interview at the start of the Rinchen Terdzö.

Jigme Rinpoche: To the Shambhala community the Rinchen Terdzö is a fairly unknown area. To the larger public in Asia the nature of this kind of large volume of empowerments is a fairly unknown area as well. They generally consider such empowerments as the Rinchen Terdzö to be something very important. But even though everybody sees it in terms of being an enormous source of blessings, not so many people are actually informed or even aware of the basic details.

I think what you need first is a brief overall history of the origination of the Rinchen Terdzö. And that brings up the subject of kama and terma. Kama and terma are the two major transmissions as far as the Old School, the Nyingma School, is concerned. Every part of the tantric lineage is rooted in the kama first. Terma is drawn from the kama teachings. The termas are extracted [from the kama, and then] rewritten, recomposed, and done in a manner that is fitting for a particular time, a particular situation. So, the source of the terma teachings is basically the kama.

Kama is where all the root tantras start. In the Nyingma lineage we have the three major modes of transmission, which are the *gyalwa gong gyü*, enlightened mind-to-mind transmission, the *rigdzin dak gyü*, the vidyadharas' way of transmission through symbol, and the *gangzak nyan gyü* meaning person-to-person verbal transmission. These are the three modes of transmission. So kama is transmitted in that style. Every major part of the root tantras is contained within it.

Terma is made in Tibet. Terma is a true local product of Tibet. Kama comes all the way from India and goes all the way back to the dharmakaya. Terma is especially related to the life and work of Padmasambhava, Guru Rinpoche. The reason he brought the terma teachings into existence is mainly because he saw the events that were going to unfold in Tibet in the future. He saw that the kama teachings would no longer be secure because, first, it's a very long time so there is always the possibility of distortions somewhere. Second, [he saw that] due to the general disintegration of elements [the kama teachings might degenerate].

Even though a lot of practice would unfold that was constant, particularly in Tibet, Guru Rinpoche foresaw that the dharma would come under heavy destruction. There would be moments when the kama teachings would be directly affected. In

order to save the kama teachings, Guru Rinpoche drew out the essence of the kama [and made the termas]. Another reason he did this is because the kama is very elaborate. It sometimes has highly complicated rituals because it's coming from a long way back in time. So, he extracted and drew out the essential part of the kama. Then he made it into what is known as terma.

Therefore, the termas are all based on the kama teachings, particularly timed in a way that they will be revealed when the right time came. This is how terma teachings flourish—beginning in history with the 108 great tertöns and thousands of minor tertöns. These terma renewed, gave life to, the actual essential part of the kama teaching so that they were not distorted, not retouched by any person. The termas have a direct link to the source in terms of closeness of the lineage. Here we are talking about the tertön, whoever it may be. The tertön can be a present, living tertön of this century, but he is directly linked to Padmasambhava.

So it cuts through all possible paths of destruction. This is why *now* is the time for terma. And this is why terma is so precious, so important. We do still have kama teachings continuing, but not in their fullest form. We still have the kama form of ritual practice being preserved in certain monasteries, but the majority is now practicing terma.

## The Actual Instructions

December 8th

The empowerments and practice instructions of the Rinchen Terdzö are actually part of the third of three sections of the overall arrangement of the collections. The two short preceding sections are the section on history, which is the life stories of the tertöns and so on, and the technical instructions on how to set up and perform the Rinchen Terdzö. The third section is called 'The Actual Instructions Section' and forms the



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

bulk of the collection. You can find outlines for the Rinchen Terdzö in the back of Richard Baron's translation of Jamgön Kongtrül's autobiography, in the back of Tulku Thondup's *Hidden Teachings Of Tibet*, and in the appendix of this book.

There are three parts to The Actual Instructions Section. They are called the development stage, the scriptural transmission, and the direct transmission. These three correspond to the three yanas of mahayoga, anuyoga, and atiyoga, the three uppermost stages of the vajrayana path, also known as the three inner tantras. These three yogas are progressive presentations of mind and meditation, with each one being more subtle and direct than the previous one. The mahayoga section contains most of the major sadhana practices in the Rinchen Terdzö.

Although each of the three inner tantras contains aspects of the other two, mahayoga is the one that concentrates the most on visualization practice, rituals, and so forth. Of the two major divisions of mahayoga, the tantra section and the sadhana section, the tantra section takes up only 3 of the 111 volumes of the Rinchen Terdzö. Its practices concentrate on the paths of means and liberation. The path of means emphasizes arduous inner yogas similar to the famous Six Yogas of Naropa. The path of liberation emphasizes understanding, contemplating, and meditating on the view. The volumes of the sadhana section fill up most of the Rinchen Terdzö. While elements of the paths of means and liberation are part of the practices in the sadhana section, it is divided according to the different types of deities that one visualizes.

Today we received four different empowerments after receiving a final section of a peaceful guru abhisheka that we started yesterday. The first new empowerment was for a wrathful guru practice, a meditation on the form of the teacher in a wrathful manifestation. Then we received an empowerment of Mahakarunikaya, a form of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, called The Body of Great Compassion. Sometimes this name refers to the form of Avalokiteshvara with a thousand arms, a thousand eyes, and eleven heads. This is the form of Avalokiteshvara that is one of the three main images in the temple. The last two empowerments we received today were for Hayagriva, the wrathful form of Avalokiteshvara, and Vajravarahi, a wrathful embodiment of wisdom in female form. All of today's empowerments plus the one we finished from yesterday came from *The One Mind Of The Siddhas*, a terma cycle discovered by Jamyang Khyentse Chökyi Lodrö.

### Practice During The Rinchen Terdzö

Remarks By Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche

During a recent interview, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche suggested several ways for people to make a practice connection with the Rinchen Terdzö. He stressed that it really depended on the time we had, saying that it might be different for someone at a practice center as opposed to someone in New York City. Here are the Sakyong's recommendations:

There are certain practices people can do to connect. They could do Werma, the Gesar practice, or Magyal Pomra [composed for lifetime members of the Dorje Kasung]. Those would be directly connected. Another practice that could be done is the



Sadhana of Luminosity because that has Guru Rinpoche, Yeshe Tsogyal, and Ekajati.

For others, it may be a good time for them to read up, study the suggested readings. It's a good way to come along.

In order to work with obstacles, one could be do a protector chant and dedicate it so that things go well. One can do that kind of very simple practice. It depends on how much time people have."

For vajrayana students, the Sakyong also recommended *The Blazing Guru*. Acharyas can give the lung for this short guru yoga written by the Sakyong.

## Reflections

December 9th

It seems to me that the Rinchen Terdzö was so important to Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche because he was able to immerse himself deeply in the instructions and practices of the termas and pure visions for months at a time. The Rinchen Terdzö is like a huge family tree that enables one to meet the essence of all one's ancestors. It must be particularly meaningful for a tertön to receive it. During an interview last week, the Sakyong pointed out that the Vidyadhara was involved with the Rinchen Terdzö for a large portion of his life in Tibet, about two years. There are times I have been looking at Namkha Drimed Rinpoche and seeing this event as a window into the life of the Vidyadhara and the many, many teachers before him.



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

We nearly finished the empowerments connected with the tantra section this afternoon. Today's empowerments were mainly for Shitro practices, although some for branch practices probably related to Vajrasattva and the hundred peaceful and wrathful deities.

The morning reading transmissions came very close to concluding the first overall section of the Rinchen Terdzö, the life stories of Padmasambhava and the tertöns. Having finished the

lives of Padmasambhava, Lhunpo Rinpoche started the life stories of Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye, who compiled the Rinchen Terdzö, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo who travelled Tibet receiving many nearly-extinct terma lineages that came to be included in the collection, and Chogyur Dechen Lingpa, an extraordinary tertön who discovered and revived many terma lineages in the Rinchen Terdzö. Chogyur Lingpa was a good friend, student, and teacher to both Khyentse and Kongtrül.

### The First Tertön, The Essential Terma

December 10th

The earliest tertön in Tibet was named Sangye Lama. He was born at the start of the 11th century and became a monk who practiced vajrayana. Sangye Lama is said to have lived eighty years. During his life he travelled and propagated the dharma widely, particularly in central Tibet. This is the area of Tibet where the dharma first flourished, where King Trisong Detsen lived, where the first monastery, Samye was built, and so on. Sangye Lama discovered several termas some of which were vajrayana practices and some of which were rituals from the sutra tradition translated from Chinese into Tibetan. The sutra texts may have been needed at that time because the monastic tradition was rebuilding itself in central Tibet after the suppression of King Langdarma in the 9th century. All that remains of Sangye Lama's original termas are some of the sutra rituals.

However, Sangye Lama left a yangter, a re-concealed a terma called *The Twenty One Dialogues Of The Sadhana That Combines The Three Roots*. In the Nyingma tradition, the three roots are the guru, yidam or meditation deity, and *dakini*. The guru is often said to be the root of blessings. The yidam, or meditation deity, is explained as the root of accomplishment or *siddhi* [Tib. ngödrup.] The dakini is explained as the root of enlightened activity. In the Kagyü tradition, the protector is explained as the root of activity. The three roots are often practiced individually, but sometimes they are combined into one liturgical practice, as they were in Sangye Lama's yangter.

Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo was a reincarnation of Sangye Lama and discovered the yangter of Sangye Lama's terma during the 19th century. This yangter is said to contain the essence of all of Sangye Lama's termas. Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo later arranged two empowerments for the practices of the yangter: the essential empowerment and the *torma* empowerment. A torma is a colorful offering cake, often a representation of a deity in a symbolic form. A torma empowerment uses a torma as the main item to confer the abhisheka. Often this type of abhisheka is short and is a condensed means to confer a practice upon a student. The two empowerments from Sangye Lama's yangter were the first empowerments in the sadhana section, which we entered today after receiving the final empowerment in the tantra section, Chogyur Lingpa's terma called *The Supreme Bliss Of The Buddhas*, which is a



Nyingma form of Chakrasamvara practice.

The sadhana section is divided in two parts: the root sadhanas and the auxiliary sadhanas. The word 'sadhana' is sometimes translated as 'the means of attainment'. A sadhana is a liturgy combined with instructions that when practiced helps one to confidently experience and stabilize a recognition of one's true nature, basic goodness, things as they are. The root sadhanas section contains empowerments for sadhanas of the guru, yidam, dakini, and protector. The auxiliary sadhanas of activity rituals section follows the root sadhana section and contains empowerments and instructions for a wide range of practice situations such as setting up a retreat, performing beneficial activities like pacifying obstacles, and so on.

After the two empowerments for Sangye Lama's yangter, the root sadhanas section continued with empowerments for practices combining the three roots, revealed by three other tertöns: Karmapa Rangjung Dorje (also known as Karma Lingpa), Ratna Lingpa, and the founder of the Northern Terma tradition, the Rigdzin Gökyi Demtruchen (also known as Rigdzin Demtruchen.) In the present day, the supreme lineage holder of the Northern Terma tradition is Taklung Tsetrul Rinpoche. Changling Rinpoche, who recently began to teach in several Shambhala Centers, is also an important lineage holder in the Northern Terma tradition.

## Little Monks In Big Shrine Halls

December 10th

For those of you who've never been to an empowerment outside of the West, it is a very different situation in the East. In the West, empowerments are usually given in contained situations with a quiet atmosphere. In Orissa, besides the ongoing general chatter, it was not uncommon to hear babies crying or to see young monks playing beside you.



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

In the midst of all the chaos the struggle was to keep one's mind on the ball, on what the teacher was doing. Today, however, I abandoned this discipline from time to time and made a study of four young monks sitting beside me. They were cute and, as we say back home, they were goofing off. I don't know what I would have done at their age if school had been cancelled for three months and I was told to sit in a shrine room for 12 hours a day. I would probably be fooling around like the eight year olds sitting between me and the pillar.

What did I see? Well, first of all, if you take a loose bit of fabric from a ceremonial scarf and blow lots of air underneath it, it will float around. Two or three people can play at this. Also, it can be exciting to bring a rock into the shrine room. Smooth rocks slide well on the black marble floor and add a bit of suspense because the noise can attract the master of discipline, an extremely genial looking monk who periodically walks between the rows and quietly stands behind the monks who loose their attention.

Teatime can be higher entertainment and sometimes dramatic. The two monks passing out the slightly sweet yellow bread rolls to our row overlooked one of the foursome. This led to a very pain-faced anxiety that I relieved by calling for another roll. Once you actually get a roll, I learned from watching my new friends, you can push the whole thing into your cup of chai and turn it into something looking like a grey sponge. I didn't watch how this was actually consumed, but later I noticed that the floor was slick with tea in front one of the little monks.

Later on, my posture became a point of curiosity for the group. There doesn't seem to be much personal interest in posture among the younger monks yet. Someone sitting up straight, especially if he is 6'4", turned out to be a big attention-grabber. Imitating a Westerner's straight back will make your face turn red if you get caught. The smallest, cutest, and most earnest of the lot was genuinely trying to get into half-lotus with me by the end of everything. He turned and gave me a proud smile when he was finally able to accomplish it.

Other shrine room pastimes we heard about included writing your entire name in leftover offering rice. The best one was secretly tying the upper robes of neighboring monks together just before everyone has to stand up at the end of a session.

### The Three Roots

December 11th

Today we continued with the series of empowerments for sadhanas combining the three roots combined into one deity. The three roots are the guru, the yidam, and the dakini or protector. In the Nyingma school the third root is the dakini, but in the Kagyü school the third root is the protector or dharmapala. The Rinchen Terdzö has sections for each in the collection; the dakini is presented as the root of enlightened activity and the dharmapala is presented as the protector of the teachings.

In the tantric approach of relating to a teacher, the guru is the root or source of blessings. Wisdom, in the Buddhist tradition, is transmitted from person to person. The teacher is someone we can meet, and someone who has already walked the path and thus knows the mind and the world from top to bottom. Having done that, the teacher possesses an enormous

amount of understanding, ability, and compassion for others. From that perspective the teacher is the root of blessings. Without a person-to-person connection there is no way to go forward on the path.

A yidam is a visualized deity that is an expression of one's fully realized nature. There are hundreds of yidams presented in the Rinchen Terdzö. Visualizing a yidam is one of the many methods employed by vajrayana Buddhism to help purify our perceptions of ourself and the world. Usually we see the world in a limited way, based strongly and unconsciously on our habits. For example, if someone we don't like walks into our room, the gap between simply seeing someone without bias and believing the person is inherently dislikable is almost non-existent. It can happen so fast that our feeling of dislike and the person walking in the room don't appear to be separate things. This binding together of basic perceptions, emotions, and ideas about others without any rational judgment has the potential to drive us into a lot of difficult situations.

Training in the yidam is a way of separating neurotic habits from unbiased perception. In contrast to sitting meditation or meditation on the breath, there is a lot of color and excitement to this style of meditation at first. But gradually one comes to see that the visualized deity is an expression or manifestation of one's own natural sanity or basic goodness. It is a training that brings one back to earth, rather than bringing one to an imaginary world. Coming back to earth carries its own kind of richness because of the contrast between natural sanity and our habitual preconceptions. The yidam is called the root or source of accomplishment. It accomplishes the basic sanity, kindness, ability, and love that one recognizes in the guru.

The third root is the dakini or protector. The Rinchen Terdzö categorizes the protector as the guardian of the teachings, and the dakini as the root of enlightened activity. Sometimes the protector is explained as the root of enlightened activity. Enlightened activity is the manifest expression of accomplishment and can range from virtuous conduct to being able to perform miracles. The Sakya master, Deshung Rinpoche once explained that miracles are nothing compared to being able to generate bodhicitta, the mind of great compassion for all beings.

Dakini is the name for the feminine aspect of enlightenment, which is emptiness from the ultimate perspective. Dakinis are depicted iconographically in female form. The word dakini can refer to female buddhas, female yidams and protectors, women who've realized enlightenment, or ordinary women who embody the energy and wisdom of a dakini. If a dakini practice is done well by a woman, it can transform the practitioner into a dakini, the embodiment of wisdom. Dakini [Tib. *khandro*] means she who goes through the sky or space, meaning the sky of realization. The male counterpart of a dakini is called a *daka*.

Protectors can be masculine or feminine. Both the dakinis and the protectors nurture our development as practitioners and protect us from losing our way on the path. A lama at the Rinchen Terdzö explained that, according to the Nyingma teachings, if one does dakini practice perfectly, one does not need to do the protector practices. He added that even though that's true, everyone still does the protector practices. Ultimately speaking, the protectors and dakinis are like the guru and the yidam, they are nothing other than—or separate from—our own mind.

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche gave a great explanation of protector principle in his book, *Training The Mind And Cultivating Loving-Kindness*. This book is commentary on *lojong* (mind training), the mahayana tradition of developing insight and compassion through contemplation of the slogans and related practices of presented in Tibet by the renowned Indian teacher Atisha (982-1054). Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche said the protectors “represent our basic awareness which is not so much absorbed in the meditative state of being, but which takes place or takes care of us during the post-meditative experience.”

He goes on to say that the experience of the protector principle is like when one is totally involved in anger at a friend, and then accidentally slams a door on one's own fingers. It's like that. We have environmental energy reminding us of wisdom and keeping us out of trouble all the time, if we are willing to train ourselves to stay open to the messages. Protector practice helps open us more to recognize wisdom and environmental reminders more and more.

The topic of the three roots is detailed and subtle. Just like a good novel that can present a tremendous wealth of detail and richness about the lives of its characters, so the teachings on the three roots present an amazing amount of detail and richness about our experience and the mind. The difference is that the tantric teachings are a living experience rooted in devotion to the teacher as the source of blessings. Everything spreads out from there. The teacher can then present us with many methods to progressively enter into a more natural and open relationship with the world.

As for the empowerments we received today, most of them were revealed by a tertön named Garwang Shikpo Lingpa. Some of the empowerments were elaborate, and some were shorter, like a tormo empowerment. It was sometimes hard to tell what was what, and we were happy to learn that Jigme Rinpoche will start briefing the Western students about what is coming up.

## Echoes Of Tibet

December 11th

Visually speaking, it was easy to see that the shrine room was filled mostly by red-robed monastics. The twenty or so Westerners sat off to the side in their section, a little block with five or six of us to a row. Behind us sat a few rows of monks, and the last few rows of the shrine room were filled in with lay people. The front porch and its wings outside the windows were filled by another 200 Tibetans camped for the day on blankets and small carpets. The feeling was



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

remarkably similar to places in Tibet that I have been on pilgrimage. Apart from the heat and cultural changes, the monastery was one of the most Tibetan-feeling environments I have visited in India. I think this was due to its isolation from industry and heavy modernization.

The oldest of the lay attendees at the Rinchen Terdzö must have travelled to India on foot, and some even stuck out their tongues upon seeing me. This is a Tibetan gesture that means one's tongue is not black, one is genuine. The greeting reminded me of Kham-Nangchen and Trungpa Rinpoche's monastery, Surmang Dutsi Til, where I lived for a month about 12 years ago. Many of the people I met in Tibet, particularly the elders, were happy in spirit and showed their good cheer without embarrassment.

The Tibet settlement in Orissa is about forty-five years old. The five different camps are now home to about 3,000 people. After the Tibetans arrived in India in the late 1950s, they were given 20 parcels of land by the Indian government. The land became the settlements for the community in exile. While in Pema Kö, Namkha Drimed Rinpoche had visions of the tantric importance of this region. Therefore, he took the parcel of land in Orissa site unseen, and founded the settlement in 1966 with about 500 people from. They built everything from the ground up. At that time this region was a jungle where wild animals like elephants and tigers still roamed freely. These animals still can be found in the forests a few hours drive from the monastery.

The forests around the Rigon Thupten Mindrolling were cut down long ago, but some trees and little groves remained in the Tibetan camps and on the short steep hills surrounding the settlement. During the day, many types of wild birds sang and flew through the guesthouse via open doorways. This was quite magical and added to the flavor of a sacred

realm. Oddly, there were no monkeys in the area. Monkeys are ubiquitous in most places I've been in India.

## A Letter From Jigme Rinpoche

Jigme Rinpoche sent the following letter to his sangha in the West as the Rinchen Terdzö got under way.

December 12th 2008

Dear Sangha,

Warmest greetings from Orissa!

The Rinchen Terdzö, a precious collection of rediscovered teachings compiled and structured by Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye, being bestowed by His Eminence, the tertön Namkha Drimed Rinpoche, got off to an auspicious start here at the new Ripa Monastery in Orissa on December 5th, the day of Medicine Buddha, a day of healing.

The Rinchen Terdzö consists of more than 100 volumes of empowerments, pointing-out instructions, and oral transmissions. These were originally authored by Guru Padmasambhava along with his famous disciple-consort, Lady Yeshe Tsogyal, and the twenty-five great highly accomplished students. Guru Rinpoche foresaw great difficulties in the future, times of confusion and conflict, and miraculously hid these precious teachings all over the country in the rocks, water, earth, sky, and in the advanced mind streams of individuals. These were then rediscovered at appropriate times by specific tertöns and brought immeasurable benefit by becoming a fresh source of liberation during times of great distress.

To compile the Rinchen Terdzö, Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye (1813-1900) painstakingly went on the historic task of collecting these rediscovered teachings, some of whose transmission lineages were on the verge of collapse, from every corner of the land. Kongtrül and Khyentse Wangpo personally received all of the transmissions of materials from whatever remaining sources were available. Kongtrül is therefore credited for having rekindled and renewed the life-force of the terma teachings.

The Rinchen Terdzö is centered around the eight great herukas of the Nyingma tradition. These are divided into five classes of deities—guru, yidam, dakini,

protector, and wealth gods<sup>2</sup>. They are conferred on the levels of the *wang* (empowerment), which is ripening, the *tri* (pointing-out), which is liberating, and the *lung* (oral teaching or reading transmission), the historical background. It is through *wangs* that one enters the tantrayana; through the *tris* one accomplishes the deity; and the *lungs* help gain confidence in the practice. Samaya is what binds all three together in an individual and establishes close links to the vajra master, the heart and soul of the mandala. It is for this reason that the vajra master, Tertön Namkha Rinpoche, during the Vajrasattva abhisheka on the opening day, asked all recipients to promise to do one hundred thousand long Vajrasattva mantras and one hundred thousand Guru Rinpoche mantras, as a prerequisite to receiving the complete Rinchen Terdzö.

A vajrayana program of this scale doesn't happen too often and cannot be conferred by every lama. Many auspicious conditions must come together for such an event to take place. This is only the second time (and the first time outside of Tibet) that His Eminence is conferring the Rinchen Terdzö. Kyabje<sup>3</sup> Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche made special requests for this transmission. The transmission lineage is very close to his heart because it was his father Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche who gave the transmission to my father. The lineage masters of this transmission lineage are Lodrö Thaye (Jamgön Kongtrül), Gyurme Pema Namgyal (Shechen Gyaltsap), Pema Trime Öser (Shechen Kongtrül), and Chökyi Gyatso (Surmang Trungpa Rinpoche).

For general practitioners, the occasion of the Rinchen Terdzö is a means to receive enormous blessings and has the power of ripening one's body, speech, and mind. For eminent masters, the Rinchen Terdzö has a special significance as they are traditionally looked upon as the perfect recipients and guardians of such transmissions for the sake of future generations. Therefore, it is extremely important that they receive this transmission. Those here include Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche and my brother Lhuntrul Rinpoche—who is transmitting the *lungs*, and an assembly *tülkus*, *khenpos*, and *lamas*.

Orissa, a coastal region in the east of India, was known as Odibisha in the past

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<sup>2</sup> Wealth deity practices are done to improve the conditions in the world and to benefit beings. These practices are presented primarily in the auxiliary rituals section of the Rinchen Terdzö. Many wealth deities are in the class of worldly protectors, but there some who are transcendent, like Lama Norlha who is a manifestation of Padmasambhava. WB

<sup>3</sup> Lit. Lord of Refuge. This title can refer to one's root lama, the head of a dharma center or monastery, or the head of a lineage.

and is mentioned in many tantric texts as one of the powerful places of tantra. Many siddhas of the past were from Odibisha. It is clear that Orissa played an important role in preserving and propagating the Buddhadharma around the tenth and eleventh centuries. The mahayana and vajrayana forms of Buddhism flourished here. Emperor Ashoka embraced Buddhism here. Many of the mind termas of my father, Tertön Namkha Rinpoche, were revealed here. There is no doubt that Orissa is blessed with powerful energies. This coastal state is also home to the Phuntsok Ling Tibetan community, resettled here after the 1959 tragedy of Tibet, as well as home to the Ripa family and community.

In 2003, the foundation stone for a sprawling five-story monastery and one hundred and fifty room hostel for the monks was laid. Now, the new Rigon monastery is completed, as though it had been especially prepared as the auspicious venue for the Rinchen Terdzö abhishekas. Close to one thousand people, consisting of members of my family, tülkus, khenpos, lamas, and the ordained and general sanghas from the East and West, attends daily. I am indeed happy to see the place already serving its purpose. What better way to begin a new monastery than this? The wonderful gathering of guru, sanghas, and precious abhishekas being conferred, brings the whole place alive. It makes it feel like the monastery has been standing here for a long time.

I am grateful once again to the people who shared my vision and work, and supported it generously. I believe the merit and virtue coming out of such an endeavor will surely benefit many generations to come. Most importantly it helps to secure the precious Buddhadharma, a true source of help and happiness. In this time of great confusion and conflict, where so much fear and unhappiness prevail, not to mention all the destruction and devastation of nature, the Rinchen Terdzö is happening. It is a great source of encouragement, help, and healing for the world—for oneself as well as for nature.

I understand that due to unavoidable circumstances, many of you are not able to attend. However, you can always connect to the precious mandala of the Rinchen Terdzö from your home. His Eminence remarked during the opening day of the Rinchen Terdzö, “Since Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava, is the root source of the Rinchen Terdzö, and since all deities of tantra are united in him, we should recite one hundred-thousand mantras of Guru Rinpoche.” So I ask everyone to recite Guru Rinpoche mantra as much as possible during the period of the Rinchen Terdzö to stay connected.



Due to the sheer power and blessings of masters and students coming together in one place in the mandala of the Rinchen Terdzö, it is also beneficial to contribute materially in whatever way you can. Offering a candle, tsok, incense, or tea, goes directly to the service of buddha, dharma, and sangha. This is also the best time for requesting prayers of healing and liberation for those who've died recently or in the past, and for those who are still alive. The Rinchen Terdzö is scheduled to complete in two and a half months, but that is not definite.

The weather here is beautiful—misty in the morning and evening, but at least the people here seem to have clear heads. During the day there is a clear blue sky with temperatures around 20 Celsius. The air is filled with the smell of incense, chai, and people. The day begins at 5:30 A.M., for some around 4:00 A.M., depending on where you sleep, and goes late into the evening. I am happy for all that is happening here. This is our great fortune.

And if this letter seems long, you don't know what really long means! Just come for a day. You get lots of sitting, a long sitting practically from 6:00am to 6:00pm. You actually float by the end of the day—not because you've attained rainbow body, but because you don't feel your bottom half because it's become completely numb. Welcome to 'the floating mandala'. I finished writing this during the morning hours of oral transmission. I can feel I am just beginning to float.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year for 2009.

With best wishes and prayers,

Gyetrul Jigme Rinpoche

Rigon Thupten Mindrolling, Orissa

P.S. Thought for the Week:

Noisy Tibetans

Bewildered Westerners

Sharing tea together

Is indeed the beautiful blessing of the Lama

Chogyur Lingpa, One Of The Great Tertöns

December 11th

Today we finished the abhishekas for the sadhanas combining the three roots into one, and started the section of empowerments for the sadhanas of the guru, the source of blessings. This part of the Rinchen Terdzö is divided into many sub-sections starting with the outer practices, which are supplications to Padmasambhava as an outer figure or a person in a historical



Gyetrul Jigme Rinpoche  
Photograph by Walker Blaine

context, so to speak. One empowerment in this section was drawn from a famous terma cycle discovered by Chogyur Lingpa called the *Barche Kunsel, Eliminating All Obstacles*. Receiving the Barche Kunsel was particularly significant for Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye; during the empowerment he realized that Chogyur Lingpa was Padmasambhava in person. At that point in his life, Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye had been stricken with a seemingly incurable leprosy that severely

affected his eyesight. Chogyur Lingpa gave him a meditation practice from the Barche Kunsel, and it cured the disease permanently with no medical explanation.

The reading transmissions related to this section of the Rinchen Terdzö contained another famous terma, a set of supplications known as *The Seven Chapters*. One part of this terma is well known in the Shambhala community because Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso Rinpoche popularized it as ‘The Guru Rinpoche Song’. *The Seven Chapters* in their entirety are included in Sogyal Rinpoche’s beautiful Tibetan-English publication of major Nyingma supplications, titled *A Great Treasure Of Blessings*. At the end of the day we moved to a preliminary abhisheka for the next series of empowerments, those for the inner practices of the guru.

Chogyur Lingpa (1829-1870) was one of the most remarkable figures in the *Rime* (non-sectarian, unbiased) movement that started in Tibet during the mid-19th century. He was a student, teacher, and friend of Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye and Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo. Throughout his life, Chogyur Lingpa experienced many visions—direct encounters with the deities—and he performed numerous miracles. One exceptional thing about him was that he revealed many termas in full view, sometimes in front of hundreds of people. On one occasion, he publically flew to the ceiling of a cave and pulled objects out of solid rock. On another, he pulled a vajra (a ritual scepter) halfway out of solid rock, leaving it partway in so that people could see what was happening.

Chogyur Lingpa was widely renowned during his lifetime. Besides being a tertön, he upheld and transmitted most of the kama lineages. Many of his termas are included in the Rinchen Terdzö. Among the terma objects he discovered were medicines, more than one hundred statues of Guru Rinpoche, and relics belonging to the Indian siddhas. Chogyur Lingpa discovered termas, yangters, and had pure visions of deities who gave him instructions. He could recall his former lives in such detail that he was able to give teachings from those lives with great clarity. And, not only that, Chogyur Lingpa could visit

Padmasambhava in a pure realm and converse with him as if he was there in person. In short, he was one of the most amazing people you could ever hope to meet. At the time of his passing in 1870 there were many auspicious signs, including mild earthquakes and rainbows.

## The Schedule Then, The Schedule Now

December 12th

At the start of the Rinchen Terdzö, the old monastery was made available for the Westerners to do their personal practice in the mornings. It turned out that many of them decided to attend the reading transmission instead. That meant arriving in the shrine room at six-thirty and listening to the lung until lunch, with a one-hour break for breakfast. Ideally one is silent during lung to let the words pour inside. For the most part, attending a reading transmission is sitting meditation with an emphasis on resting the mind on sound.

The schedule was long and most people were in the shrine room for around ten hours a day. A group of older monks performed an additional practice called chöd after dinner, and the rinpoches continued their evenings with meetings, audiences, and concluding practices. Namkha Drimed Rinpoche's discipline was astonishing, particularly for someone who was seventy years old. His Eminence's devotion to the Rinchen Terdzö was palpable, as was the strength of his focus on Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche throughout the day.

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's account of the Rinchen Terdzö in *Born In Tibet* shows he had a different style of scheduling the first time he bestowed the empowerments. Much to my surprise, I read that the reading transmissions began at 2:30 A.M., four hours earlier than we started in India. Instead of giving the empowerments all in one batch (which I suspect saves a bit of time), the Vidyadhara gave them at four different times during the day, twice in the morning, once in the afternoon, and once in the evening, starting at six. I am guessing he used the breaks to perform the preparatory practices necessary to do the next empowerments. He started his morning at 4:30, half an hour later than Namkha Drimed Rinpoche did in Orissa. Like His Eminence, the Vidyadhara had incredible discipline, but in another way. During the Rinchen Terdzö, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche was the age of a 9th or 10th grader.

## Chanting

December 12th

In the evenings after the empowerments, the assembly recited chants from the monastery's 220-page chant book. This chant book has about eighty liturgies in it. Some of the chants are more than ten pages long and can take ten minutes at a brisk pace. *The Seven Chapters* is included in the chant book in its entirety. This evening we also used an auxiliary chant book that I have only seen two copies of—in the whole room—on any of the nights it has been called for. Many of the monks have memorized all the monastery's rotation of daily liturgies.

Unlike in the West, the closing chants at the monastery varied each day. The *umdze* (chant leader) would start a new liturgy and everyone joined in as soon as they recognized the chant. The supplications for the longevity of the teachers always remained the same, as did the very final dedications. Aside from those, it was sometimes hard to predict what would come next. We quickly learned to get help from the monks closest to us, although it was not often the case that we were near someone who knew what was going on. Sometimes our chant book would get passed back and forth in a row until it found a monk who knew the pages well enough to help us. At other times, we were lost until the *umdze* started a chant we recognized.

The longevity chants for the teachers included those for His Holiness the Dalai Lama, His Holiness Penor Rinpoche (who passed away just after the Rinchen Terdzö), Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, Jigme Rinpoche, Lhunpo Rinpoche, and Tulku Kunkyab Rinpoche. Prayers for the longevity of His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche were chanted at the end of every session during the day.

Other than the longevity chants, most of the chants we did in the evenings were aspirations. Aspiration chants express wishes for the benefit of all beings, both in life and at the time of death. They also express wishes for the strength and spread of the teachings, for the health and harmony in all communities, for good weather, healthy crops, and so on. In short, this kind of chant is for everything possible to go well. One chant we recited on many occasions was *The King Of Aspiration Prayers*, *The Aspiration For Noble Excellent Conduct*. The first ten verses of this aspiration are included as part of the Vajrayogini sadhana that is commonly practiced in Shambhala.

The chanting speed at the monastery was really, really fast. Most Tibetan chants are metered, which allows for things to move quickly, and the *umdze* clicks the side of a muffled hand bell to keep up the pace. Only one or two of the Tibetan-speakers in our group could keep up with the monks. The literary form of Tibetan language is terse, so even if you can keep up with the sound of the text, keeping up with the meaning is another matter. My goal soon became to recite the first two to four syllables of each seven or eight beat line. The best approach is memorization, and it was quite a thrill when I could keep up with the monastics during the few snatches of text I knew by heart. I am not sure if many of the English-speaking Tibetans would have fared much better during evening chants at a *dathiün* (month long retreat) in the West.

### Three Days In One

December 12th–14th

During the last three days we continued to receive empowerments related to practices of the guru, the root of blessings. There are three categories of practices related to the guru: outer,

inner, and secret. First came the *outer* practices, which are generally supplications to the historical figure of Padmasambhava. We had only one abhisheka in this category, an abhisheka for a terma discovered by Chogyur Lingpa.



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

The *inner* practices of the guru are practices that emphasize the guru in peaceful manifestations of compassion, and the *secret* practices

of the guru are practices that emphasize the guru in wrathful manifestations of compassion. The categories of outer, inner, and secret are classifications of practice in terms of the mind of the practitioner. They offer progressively more subtle entries into the depths of one's nature. Traditionally, 'inner' is said to be what we can feel physically or internally as opposed to an experience everyone shares. For example, I feel my indigestion; nobody else does because it is an inner experience.

The implication of 'secret' is that something is not obvious, rather than something secret that is deliberately locked away and hidden. However, all the practices presented in the Rinchen Terdzö are secret from the perspective that they are not taught to a student outside of the proper context. All of the guru practices are meditations that help develop the confidence that the wisdom and sanity of the teacher is also at the core of one's own being.

The inner practices of the guru in the Rinchen Terdzö are divided into three areas of emphasis, called the three *kayas* (Tib. ku). Kaya is a Sanskrit word, the honorific way to say 'body' or 'form'. It is sometimes easier to think of a kaya as referring to an aspect of enlightenment instead of a body. The word kaya can refer to the body of an enlightened being, an empowered statue of a buddha, or an aspect of enlightened mind. For example, the practices in the section of the Rinchen Terdzö devoted to the three kayas of the inner guru emphasize either the ultimate essence of the guru, emptiness, as the teacher; the luminous nature of the ultimate essence as the teacher; or the compassionate display of the guru in this world as the teacher. These three kayas are respectively called the *dharmakaya*, *sambhogakaya*, and *nirmanakaya*, or in Tibetan, the *chöku*, *longku*, and *tülku*. Tülku is also the word used to refer to a reincarnate teacher.

In middle of the yesterday afternoon, there was a noisy commotion out on the veranda. No one in the front of the shrine room knew what it was. The whole room hushed, including

Namkha Drimed Rinpoche. We all started shifting to look out the temple doors. For a moment I wondered if someone had died or had a seizure.

After ten seconds of staring to adjust to the sunlight streaming into the building I could see waves of movement on the porch. People were running this way and that as a swarm of bees swept through the crowd outside. All of a sudden, dozens of people ran into the crowded shrine room and doors were being slammed everywhere. Total pandemonium! Namkha Drimed Rinpoche went into a deep belly laugh. The adventure with the bees continued throughout the afternoon until a sensible Tibetan layman filled a censer with lots of broken incense and made a big smoky offering out on the porch.

Over the last three days Jigme Rinpoche was composing his letter about the Rinchen Terdzö. During the morning reading transmission, I was called to the shrine room to quietly review my transcription of his text. Because it was a bit boring during the lung, any unusual occurrence got everyone's attention. I received a close inspection by the entire monastic community as I worked on the letter with Jigme Rinpoche. The lay people outside got to make an assessment of me as I plodded my way through the crowd on the veranda to get to the side door of the shrine room for the meeting. Slowly the Westerners and Tibetans are figuring each other out, and the cultural differences are starting to melt into curiosity and warm smiles.

### Good Chöpöns

December 15th

Before flying to India, I heard that a good head chöpön is essential at a Rinchen Terdzö. A chöpön is a master of offerings. This person maintains the shrine throughout the day and brings objects from the shrine to the teacher and then from the teacher to the students. For example, the very first part of an empowerment is a symbolic purification of the students as they enter the environment. This is done through the teacher's blessing along with recitation of a mantra and drinking water from a ritual vase. The mantra used is that of Vajrasattva, the buddha associated with purity as well as being the unity of all the buddhas. The vase water is consecrated by the teacher before the students enter the shrine room. Then the chöpön or an assistant serves the water to everyone as they enter the empowerment.

The offerings, icons, and empowerment substances changed with every abhisheka, and the numbers of different objects needed to be set up for the next day sometimes numbered in the hundreds. The Rinchen Terdzö was so complicated, changing shrines and icons so often, that at least twelve assistant chöpöns were needed, one of who was solely responsible for keeping track of where we were in the multiple volumes of text that we jumped through during the course of the day.

Today we continued receiving the abhishekas for the inner practices of the guru. A computer malfunction slowed writing and preparations over the last few days and contributed to a feeling of being lost during some of this afternoon's empowerments. Feeling lost isn't new; it's been inevitable given the complexity of the Rinchen Terdzö. Today's confusion was complicated by two of our empowerments lists being in conflict about what was going on.

I recall a story Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche told a few years ago. He was attending a long series of empowerments given by His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. The Sakyong said the entire front row of lamas could not find the page of the text they were on. They asked the chöpon who looked at them and said he didn't know either. This meant that the only person who knew what was happening was Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. Fortunately, the main thing to do at an empowerment is to regard the teacher as a completely enlightened being, relax, and follow the teacher's instructions about what to do next.

Besides His Eminence and Lama Tenzin (the head chöpon), the person responsible for making sure we didn't get lost was Lama Kunam, the chöpon in charge of keeping our place in the texts. Every few days we'd find ourselves paused during an empowerment while Lama Kunam rapidly flipped through a stack of texts at his seat. Then he would suddenly jump to his feet with a few pages in hand and swiftly bring them to His Eminence at the throne. Lama Kunam, who accompanied Namkha Drimed Rinpoche in the West in 2008, was unflappable during these liturgical gaps, even with 800 people curiously looking to see if we missed a beat or not.

Usually Tibetan texts are not as carefully indexed and footnoted as their Western counterparts, which was the main reason why Lama Kunam's job was necessary. In the middle of a sentence it might abruptly read, "Finish as before," and give no further instructions. His Eminence rarely missed a beat during the empowerments. Most days there was a moment when he redirected a chöpon who had fallen behind in bringing this or that vase or icon. However, the chöpons did an amazing job throughout the Rinchen Terdzö. They continually helped each other, and they all exuded great respect for His Eminence. Their sense of humor and light touch was always evident as was their incredible precision about what needed to be done and, most importantly, when it needed to happen.

Within the section of the text that presents the abhishekas for the inner practices of the guru, today we reached the nirmanakaya guru, practices focused on the guru in the manifest aspect of compassion. Tonight the western students were supposed to have their first briefing with Jigme Rinpoche, but the abhishekas lasted two hours longer than expected, until eight at night, so the meeting was postponed until tomorrow.

## The Inner Guru, The Eastern And Western Guru

December 16th

Before I got to Orissa, I thought the guru section of the Rinchen Terdzö would contain only guru yogas—meditations where one visualizes the form of a teacher, such as Padmasambhava, and then supplicates the teacher for blessings. Such practices help increase the stability of the mind, along with opening one up to the good qualities of the teacher, qualities which are ultimately one's own. This in turn brings out more of one's natural appreciation and devotion to the teacher, to the lineage, and to buddha nature itself.

I was surprised to learn how many practices in the guru section of the Rinchen Terdzö were not guru yogas. There were many yidam and protector practices as well. Last night Jigme Rinpoche explained that in these cases the yidam practices were written from the point of view of guru yoga; the yidam is considered expressly an aspect of Padmasambhava. Thus, for example, the mantras for the yidams all have the mantras of Padmasambhava woven into them. Later we learned that other practices in this section were not necessarily guru yogas, but branch practices which were related to the guru yoga. An example of a branch practice would be a protector practice for a terma cycle to which a particular guru yoga belonged.

The sequence of the Rinchen Terdzö isn't simply a big list or a bunch of bins to pick things out of. The ordering of the entire treasury of empowerments and instructions is itself a teaching on the evolution of how to practice in a profound and vast manner. The teachings move towards progressively refined practices that rely more and more directly on confidence in one's own basic goodness. At the same time, the teachings present a complete array of methods to benefit others, particularly in the auxiliary sadhanas section much later in the collection. I think this is another reason why giving and receiving the transmissions of the Rinchen Terdzö is so meaningful for lineage holders to experience. It is a direct and subtle, deep and wide-ranging journey through the entire path.

For a lineage holder like Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, receiving the Rinchen Terdzö expands what he is able to offer others. While the Sakyong is very much a part of the West, he is also a big part of the East. The expectations of him are very great, not only because he is Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's son, but also because he is the rebirth of Jamgön Mipham, one of the most influential teachers in the Nyingma lineage. Through receiving the Rinchen Terdzö, the Sakyong becomes more able to bestow whatever transmissions are requested of him when he travels in Asia. People will have greater confidence in him and in their own heritage knowing that he upholds the heart practices of the Nyingma lineage.



## Ngari Panchen

December 17th

Today we received more empowerments related to the terma called *The Seven Chapters*. This terma was revealed by a tertön named Ngari Panchen. He is most well known in the West for his remarkable book, *Perfect Conduct*. This text describes all the levels of conduct in the dharma, from how to be a dignified monastic or a lay person, to how to properly be a bodhisattva in whatever we do, and finally to how to be a fully realized tantric meditator.

Ngari Panchen lived from 1487 to 1542, the period when the Europeans began to colonize North America. He was an emanation of the enlightened mind of King Trisong Detsen, the ruler who invited Padmasambhava to firmly establish the dharma in Tibet. In his early life, Ngari Panchen was something of a prodigy because he is said to have mastered and realized the teachings of the Nyingma and the later schools, as well as mastering what are known as the major and minor sciences. This would be like getting doctorates in philosophy, religion, medicine, literature, and science all at once. Panchen, a title he received in his early twenties, means great pandit. A pandit is a title from the Indian tradition, referring to a very learned scholar-teacher.



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

At the age of 21 Ngari Panchen started to meditate more intensively. He did retreats at many pilgrimage sites in Tibet and Nepal, and he received transmissions and teachings from both Tibetan and Nepalese gurus. He was a true renunciate, had few possessions, and never stayed in one place for very long. While in retreat, he had many visions of the deities he was meditating on. More importantly, he began having dreams and visions of Padmasambhava who bestowed empowerments and blessings on him. At this time he fully recollected his life as King Trisong Detsen.

Even with all these incredible experiences it is of note that Ngari Panchen did not become very active as a teacher until he was 38. Up until then he concentrated on retreat, receiving teachings and transmissions, and realizing the meaning of all the meditation practices he had received. When Ngari Panchen did begin to teach, he put a lot of energy into impartially helping the different schools of Buddhism in central Tibet.

Only at the age of 46 did Ngari Panchen begin to reveal his termas. He was unusual as a tertön because he did not have a consort. Tertöns often have consorts, children, and possessions. It is rare for a tertön be a celibate monastic. However, it's important to add that a consort relationship with a tertön is not ordinary because the consorts to tertöns are also highly practiced, realized meditators. The tertön and the consort find each other, so to speak, because of very strong aspirations made in earlier lives to help each other to revitalize the teachings. This is the case with both male and female tertöns, although female tertöns, like monastic ones, are unusual.

Ngari Panchen passed away at the age of 56 after benefiting beings widely. His book, *Perfect Conduct* is still one of the main texts on the topic vows and conduct studied in the Nyingma lineage.

### Seeing Another Side

December 18th

Yesterday a big change happened in the shrine room. Another wave of the Ripa clan arrived and the available space in the family seating area on the stage to the left of His Eminence overflowed. The little crowd made things more difficult for the chöpons. Today we discovered that the Sakyong, the Sakyong Wangmo, and Lhunpo Rinpoche had all been moved to the other side of the throne, shrine right. Along with this, it was decided that the five main recipients should come to Namkha Rinpoche's right side rather than his left. Later we learned that this was the place where His Eminence sat when he received the Rinchen Terdzö from the Vidyadhara. Because of the changes, the Westerners, who were also seated shrine right, had a better view of the Sakyong, Jigme Rinpoche, and the others when they received the empowerments.

Often it was hard to keep up with what was happening during the Rinchen Terdzö because Namkha Drimed Rinpoche spoke quickly and none of us had the texts for the empowerments. However, even without hearing the words, knowing the names of the abhishekas and the general structure of all empowerments helped us keep up with things in a basic way. For example, at the start of any abhisheka one retakes the refuge vows—the commitments to the Buddha as teacher and example, the dharma as the path, and the sangha as the community on the path. This, and other similar parts of the empowerments are easy to spot, and since we repeated the verses His Eminence said, it was easy to click in. The many symbolic implements, vases with bright colored scarves and so on, also gave clues about what was happening and what to visualize.

During the start of the Rinchen Terdzö I developed a mental habit of letting the main recipients 'go first' when Namkha Drimed Rinpoche bestowed the different sections of the

empowerments—the vases of water, small painted icons, and so on. I’d wait for the five main recipients to receive the symbol for whatever aspect of purification or wisdom was being emphasized, and then afterwards I did the corresponding visualization. Initially, that seemed to be the way to go about things. They got their empowerment, I got mine, and that was it.

But because of the shift in the seating around the throne, I was able to see how the Sakyong received the empowerments and my outlook changed. I don’t know exactly what triggered the change, but I noticed the Sakyong in his role as a student rather than that of a teacher. His body and actions were those of someone completely attentive and humble in the presence of Namkha Rinpoche. He was really soaking everything in, becoming an empty vessel in order to receive the empowerments fully. He was soft and gentle while being alert and strong.

As I watched the Sakyong I thought more about relaxation and devotion. It became clear that while I was lucky enough to receive the Rinchen Terdzö, I was mainly in Orissa to witness the Sakyong. Seeing him receive the teachings, and particularly *how* he received them, I saw things about myself—where I held back and how I could open up more. I felt a bit weepy when I wrote this because it seemed like watching the Sakyong enabled me to drop some my ambition and my heart relaxed. After the empowerments today, a friend made a similar observation about how impressive it was to see the Sakyong in the role of a student.

By the way, there was a lot of humor on the stage. The soft-shouldered collisions in the midst of the principle recipients’ efforts to quickly and smoothly reach the throne have made everyone laugh at one time or another. The Sakyong regularly checked in on his students in the shrine room, and often he sent one or another of us a smile or some raised eyebrows for fun. Yesterday, the Sakyong noticed I was perking up my posture and playfully mimicked me. As he stood beside Namkha Drimed Rinpoche’s throne between empowerments, he pushed up his head and neck while briefly moving his eyes upward like he was looking at the sky. We both chuckled.

## Turning A Corner

December 18th

Today was a milestone. We received the empowerments of the Könchok Chidu, a set of abhishekas for practices of the guru, yidam, and dakini discovered by the tertön Jatsön Nyingpo (1585-1656). Like Ngari Panchen, Jatsön Nyingpo was one of the rare tertöns who were celibate monastics. The Könchok Chidu is one of the most widely practiced in the Karma Kagyü, while the Longchen Nyingtik is the terma cycle most widely practiced in the Nyingma.

When the Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche passed into parinirvana in 1987, his



Photograph by Walker Blaine

cremation was lead by His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. It took several weeks to prepare for the cremation, which was held at Karme Chöling in Vermont. At that time there were about five hundred people living mostly in tents around the center and another 2,500 came for the cremation itself. After the event, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche stayed at Karmê Chöling another ten days and started to

teach on dzogchen, the highest teachings in the Nyingma school of Buddhism, as well as give the abhishekas for the Könchok Chidu, the Longchen Nyingtik, and Vajrakilaya, which is the most widely practiced yidam in the Nyingma and famous for removing obstacles.

These events were the start of the fulfillment of one of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's predictions that dzogchen would be taught at Karmê Chöling in the future. I was one of a handful of new students who were permitted to attend Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche's empowerments in Vermont. His Holiness' presence and the importance of the empowerments were so inspiring that I abandoned my vacation plans and travelled Halifax to receive the empowerments from him again later in the summer. Today it felt like things were re-arising in a new cycle, at least from the perspective of my own life. Events from twenty-two years ago at Karmê Chöling were again unfolding before my eyes, except in this case, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's own lineage stream of the Könchok Chidu was being poured into the Sakyong.

After a great deal of digging through files before travelling to India, I found the descriptions of the empowerments from 1987 in my files and brought them with me to Orissa. That we had empowerment instructions for only handful of the abhishekas of the Rinchen Terdzö was a strong reminder of the importance of translation for the future of Buddhism in the West. With these descriptions, a few of us were able to follow exactly what happened today—not including an additional ritual that we determined was an extra empowerment to hold the lineage. Seeing the instructions in English made sense of several things that had already happened during the Rinchen Terdzö. For example, I was reminded that a text symbolizes both the teachings and the empowerment to teach.

The whole day was filled with unexpected understandings. Early in the afternoon, we figured out that certain abhishekas were long, middling, and short variations of the same empowerment. The three-part empowerments weren't specifically mentioned in some of the

Tibetan language lists produced by the monastery, so we were getting lost every now and then. The liberal interpretations of numbering explained why some descriptions of the Rinchen Terdzö said there were well over a thousand empowerments in the collection, and others said there were only six or nine hundred.

At the end of the day, we sat beside a monk who had memorized the chants in the Ripa Monastery chant book. He was one of the best, and got us to all the right pages at all the right times. Up until this evening, Patricia and I had been going a bit crazy trying to get help from nearby monks who usually didn't speak English and weren't up to speed about what was happening. Tonight, we left the shrine room with a fistful of post-its in our chant book, and even though we were still full of questions, we were happy to have learned that the Sakyong's longevity chant was about fifth in the sequence of the twenty chants that concluded the day.

## Dalai Lamas And The Rinchen Terdzö

December 19th

The first time I visited the Potala Palace of Dalai Lamas in Lhasa I didn't know much Tibetan history, was thus surprised to see a long shrine hall in the Potala devoted to large statues of Padmasambhava, the eight Vidyadharas who taught Padmasambhava the Eight Logos, and Padmasambhava's eight principal manifestations, such as Dorje Trolö. The hall looked more Nyingma than Gelugpa, the school of the Dalai Lamas. Generally speaking, the Gelugpa put less emphasis on Padmasambhava than the other schools of Tibetan Buddhism, especially the Nyingma. That was when I learned that there were Dalai Lamas other than the present Dalai Lama, His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, who had a strong connection with the Nyingma School.

Today we had an empowerment for a pure vision revealed by the 5th Dalai Lama, Lozang Gyatso. He was born in 1617 and was said to be the emanation of the enlightened activity of King Trisong Detsen as well as being the embodiment of Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva of compassion. At twenty-one he took full ordination and was already extremely learned, having mastered the classical curriculum. Lozang Gyatso studied impartially with masters in many traditions including the Nyingma. The 5th Dalai Lama had disciples from all four schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

There were prophecies that the 5th Dalai Lama would find both termas and pure visions. When he visited Samye, the first monastery in Tibet, there were auspicious circumstances for him to find termas, but the conditions didn't fully mature and so he did not reveal any. However, he later had visions and empowerments from the three roots (guru, yidam, and dakini) and he wrote these down, along with his own commentaries, in a text called *The Twenty-Five Sealed Pure Visions*. Several of these practices are included in the Rinchen Terdzö. Today's *Bringing The Essential Power Of Amitayus* was the first. Amitayus is the buddha who

confers long-life, and in this case was presented as a manifestation of the guru, the first root.

The 5th Dalai Lama is also known for his many political achievements. He built the Potala Palace, one of the most impressive buildings I've ever seen. He had great power because Mongol Gushri Khan took over most of Tibet and gave all civil and religious property to him. Later the Dalai Lama went to Beijing where the emperor venerated him and began a patron-priest relationship. The 5th Dalai Lama ruled both Central Tibet and the eastern region of Kham.

In 1682, Dalai Lama Lozang Gyatso passed away at the age of sixty-one. The 6th Dalai Lama, Tsangyang Gyatso (1682-1706) took birth in a family descended from the tertön Pema Lingpa. Though not included in the Rinchen Terdzö, the 6th Dalai Lama is very famous for his poetry. In fact, the manager of our guesthouse was reading some of the 6th Dalai Lama's poetry to us a few nights ago. The 6th Dalai Lama was the only Dalai Lama who was not a monastic. He had many girlfriends in Lhasa and was fond of *chang*, Tibetan beer. He had his girlfriends' homes in Lhasa painted yellow, and some remain that way even today. His poetry mixes devotion, dharma, love, and longing much in the style of the poetry of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche.

The other evening we added an especially lengthy prayer for the activity and longevity of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. This came about the time we heard that His Holiness had accepted the invitation to formally open the monastery. It was hoped that he would come during the Rinchen Terdzö, but as it turned out the formal opening of the monastery occurred a year later, in January of 2010.

Last night I noticed many of the littlest monks had already memorized the longevity supplication for Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche that was written by Namkha Drimed Rinpoche. I was told this had been a class assignment. Seeing the tiny monks belting out the Sakyong's longevity chant from memory was amusingly embarrassing. I had not memorized the chant in English or Tibetan.

### The Ripas And The Trungpas

### An Interview With Gyetrul Jigme Rinpoche

Last week the Sakyong invited me to his sitting room for a short meeting. He said that he was eager for me to speak with Jigme Rinpoche about a conversation the two of them had with His Eminence the day before. Namkha Drimed Rinpoche had spoken of how the Rinchen Terdzö was going, the connections between his family with the Trungpa Lineage, and how His Eminence had come to Orissa many years ago. I met with Jigme Rinpoche today during the morning reading transmissions. I sat beside him on the stage while his brother, Lhunpo

Rinpoche, was giving the lung.

Walker Blaine (WB): Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche asked me to ask you about what His Eminence said about how the events were going. Rinpoche mentioned that His Eminence was very happy, that he talked about the local deities being happy, and about the special circumstances we are in. The Sakyong wanted me to see what you could say about that.

Jigme Rinpoche (JR): What His Eminence feels is that this Rinchen Terdzö is happening at a very particular time of his life. That makes him extremely happy and satisfied because with his advanced age and very busy schedule he feels it is better done now than to wait. At the same time he feels that things have to develop in a very natural, spontaneous way. He sees that without any particular effort, things just seem to have happened. He is extremely happy to see that lots of positive things came together in order for this Rinchen Terdzö to happen at this monastery. For example, the site of the initiations was completed just in time so it could host everybody who is here.

His Eminence is also very happy that the Sakyong is now receiving the Rinchen Terdzö, the lineage transmissions that he so deserves to receive. His Eminence is giving him what he has actually received from the Sakyong's father. He has been a kind of custodian of this precious lineage transmission. And so he is very happy to give it back to the rightful heir.

Also there is the lung, the oral transmission. It wasn't really planned. Somehow it happened at the last minute. We were not so sure my brother Lhunpo Rinpoche could come because of his travel documents. But it just happened at the last minute that everything worked out very well. His Eminence is very pleased to see that both the wang and the lung are happening at this place.

Then, we have the monastic community from Nepal gathered here with the community from Orissa. It is important for them to receive these transmissions. Our main practices here and in Nepal, as well as in Tibet, are very linked to the terma teachings. So it is so important that the practitioners receive proper transmissions of wang and lung. So they are benefitting from this, as are the students from the West.

Another reason Rinpoche says he is happy is related to Orissa being a very important tantric place. The teachings happening here have a special significance in relation to the local deities, in relation to the energy, the natural elements. All of those things become conducive; the whole atmosphere is once again renewed, restored,

recharged. This is because it is a place where so many of the siddhas<sup>4</sup> actually obtained accomplishment. Siddhas have attained accomplishment by meditating in powerful places like Orissa. So he is just very happy about how the whole thing is progressing.

WB: The Sakyong also mentioned something about the 10th Trungpa [Chökyi Nyinche] having a connection with your grandfather.

JR: Yes. The other day my father was telling me that in a way, what is happening now has to happen. It has to happen because he feels that there was some kind of seed planted as far back as the time of the 10th Trungpa. The 10th Trungpa requested the Rinchen Terdzö from my grandfather during a visit to Tsawa Gon. Tsawa Gon is not so far away from the center of the Ripa monasteries. This is also the region where my father received the Rinchen Terdzö from the 11th Trungpa.

WB: Is that near Yak Gompa, where the Vidyadhara bestowed the Rinchen Terdzö?

JR: Yes, Tsawa Gon is near Yak Gompa.

So, the 10th Trungpa sent a message to my grandfather, Jigme Tsewang Chokdrub, saying that he would like to receive the Rinchen Terdzö from him. Unfortunately, my grandfather was not well at that time. So this could not be completed as wished by the 10th Trungpa.

My father feels that event sowed a seed where a time of teacher-student relationship would take place between the Ripas and the Trungpas in the future. And this is exactly how it has happened. When the 11th Trungpa was going to give the Rinchen Terdzö at Yak Gompa, my father immediately went because he had heard about the 10th Trungpa's wish from my grandfather. There was always something. Trungpa was already in his mind, and so my father went to receive the Rinchen Terdzö from the 11th Trungpa. He was the main tülku recipient in the sangha at that event. And now he is giving it back to the Sakyong, the son of the 11th Trungpa. It's as though things had been planned this way for many years.

WB: The Sakyong said there might be more to be known about the Vajrayana connections with this area. You talked about Odibisha to the Western students and

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<sup>4</sup> Someone who has attained siddhi.



also in your letter, but the Sakyong was saying something about the proximity to Bihar and Bodhgaya. Is this another theme that your father considers significant?

JR: Well, when my father was escaping from Tibet with all the great lamas, including the previous Dzongsar Khyentse and Dudjom Rinpoche, many of the lamas had a prophecy and a vision to go to Pema Kö. Pema Kö is a *bay-nay*, a hidden sacred place blessed by Guru Rinpoche. It was foretold in prophecies contained in several of Guru Rinpoche's texts that in the degenerate time when the whole country would be taken over by the barbarians, one should proceed towards this bay-nay, Pema Kö.

So, when the Chinese actually invaded Tibet, every lama had one mind to go to Pema Kö. Pema Kö is on the border to India. My father went to Pema Kö and many other lamas met there. That place actually provided a temporary relief to the people on the run. Even though the rest of the country had been already taken over by the Chinese, somehow Pema Kö remained untouched for some years. And this is how many of the lamas could actually breathe. They could regain their health, regain their practices. It provided a temporary home.

While staying in Pema Kö, it was very clear that it would not remain safe forever. At that time, my father began to have visions of Odibisha [the tantric name for Orissa] as the next place to go. For a tertön, for him, it is important that wherever he travels, wherever he lives, it is a tantric power place like Pema Kö, Odibisha, or Bhutan. His Eminence spent several months in practice at Taktsang, Bhutan, and there he revealed many terma teachings.

Odibisha is mentioned in many of the tantric texts as a power place. But additionally, my father has a particular link to Odibisha because he had a prophecy to go to Odibisha. That's how he came to Orissa with the rest of his people. After arriving here, he began to see many signs, many visions of past siddhas, as well as the local deities. And he also saw that Orissa still has many hidden places. It still has many hidden practitioners, who are not visible to common people. He feels that the actual practice lineage of tantra continues in Orissa uninterruptedly from the time of the Buddha.

Actually, Orissa's local historians claim that Orissa is Uddiyana. There is a lot of material to support that, which claims this is the actual place that was Uddiyana. There are now towns and cities here named Uddiyana. Also, there's a history of Indrabodhi's kingdom being in this region. The Indian historians believe that Padmasambhava was actually born in Orissa. There's a book being written on that.

The archeological excavations in Orissa almost all support this; all the artifacts are from the tantrayana. These are vajrayana deities that are not common in the rest of India. For example, we have the 64 Yoginis Temple where you can go and you see all the footprints of dakinis all over the rocks. This is where they were supposed to have danced during a *tsok*, a *ganachakra* [a tantric feast]. You can see the footprints of the dakinis. The 64 tantric yoginis' footprints really are imprinted on the rocks. And there you can see a really beautiful, powerful stone statue of Vajravarahi dating from the 10th century.

WB: I wanted to confirm that the two lineages of the Rinchen Terdzö that His Eminence holds are from Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and from the Very Venerable Kalu Rinpoche.

JR: And there is a third from his father, Jigme Tsewang Chokdrub. He was actually very young when he received it from his father, he must have been around five years old. That's the first time he received the Rinchen Terdzö, from his own father.

WB: Thank you.

### Appreciating The Heart Of Transmission

December 21st



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

When the Vidyadhara bestowed the Rinchen Terdzö the second time in Tibet, there were about three hundred people present. That's less than half the number here. The Sakyong remarked that since there were fewer people at Yak Gompa it would have been easier to hear the empowerments. He added that the people who most need to hear everything are those being empowered to carry on the transmission. It's been amazing that everyone at the empowerments has been

able to listen to His Holiness during the day. Somehow an auxiliary generator has carried us through all the power failures during the Rinchen Terdzö thus far.

This afternoon I found myself on the upper floors of the monastery during the mid-afternoon break. It's a pleasant place to visit because there is a spacious gallery that looks down on the shrine room through big glass windows. I had wanted to ask a question of Jigme

Rinpoche, but suddenly a kusung appeared and said, “The Sakyong can see you now.” He must have thought I was seeking an audience with the Sakyong. It was a natural mistake since all the main rinpoches were staying on the same floor of the monastery.

Seizing my good fortune, I went into the Sakyong’s small audience room. He was seated on his couch, relaxing during the break. Every time I’ve had a chance to speak with the Sakyong since the start of the Rinchen Terdzö, I’ve found him to be content, happy, and eager to chat. One meeting last week dwelled on his excitement about the Shambhala Lineage tree. He showed me photos of Noedup Rongae’s sketches along with photos of the Rigden statues in the Gesar palace in Golok, Tibet. The Sakyong mentioned the Tibetan statues were more nirmanakaya in manifestation than what would be in the thangka.

During my brief visit this afternoon, the Sakyong spoke to me about how the Rinchen Terdzö was progressing. Toward the end of our conversation the Sakyong said, “He’s crying.” I asked the Sakyong what he meant, and he replied that His Eminence had been crying during the last two days of empowerments. During one abhisheka yesterday, we stopped for a few minutes while His Holiness wept. A moment after he told me this, the Sakyong had to return to the empowerments. I stood alone for a moment, speechless and contemplated what His Eminence has been through, and how the great treasure he was giving to the Sakyong, the Ripas, and the all the sanghas represented in Orissa.

We sit on the edge of a major transition between the generation of great teachers who left Tibet in the 50s and 60s and the present generation of teachers, who have entered a world very different from their predecessors’. This transition is so important for this world and the dharma. I have been making aspirations that the Sakyong be able to absorb as much as possible during this retreat.

## Another Rinchen Terdzö

December 21st

Today we began the second week of empowerments for the inner peaceful practices of the nirmanakaya aspect of the guru, the practices that put the most emphasis on the manifestation of the teacher as the display of compassion.

During the Rinchen Terdzö in Orissa, a second Rinchen Terdzö was offered in Dehradun, North India. Kyabje Taklung Tsetrul Rinpoche bestowed the empowerments. Taklung Tsetrul Rinpoche is the head of Dorje Drak, which is one of six main Nyingma monasteries. This monastery is the main Tibetan seat for the Northern Termas discovered by Rigdzin Gökyi Demtruchen. His Eminence Namkhai Nyingpo Rinpoche bestowed the reading transmissions. The principle recipients of this transmission of the Rinchen Terdzö were the rebirths of Their

Holinesses Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche and Dudjom Rinpoche, Khamtrul Rinpoche, and a host of other young reincarnate teachers, along with a great many lamas, khenpos, monastics, and lay sangha members. Her Eminence Mindrolling Jetsün Khandro Rinpoche, the daughter of Kyabje Mindrolling Trichen Rinpoche was the sponsor of this event.

### Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye

When hearing or reading about the activity of amazing beings one is humbled. This is especially true when learning about Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye, whose activity and intellect seems almost superhuman. His vision was so vast and his desire to benefit so strong that after he passed away he took many simultaneous rebirths. Two of them—Shechen Kongtrül and Palpung Kongtrül—had direct connections with Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. Shechen Kongtrül was one of the Vidyadhara's main gurus, and Palpung Kongtrül gave Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche his monastic ordination. Their names reflect the name of the monastery that the rebirth was connected with. Shechen and Palpung were the two main places where Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye stayed and taught during his life.

As an aside, it is significant that three of the Vidyadhara's main teachers—Shechen Kongtrül, Khenpo Gangshar, and His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche—were successive abbots of the Shechen monastery shedra or monastic university. The founder and first abbot of the shedra or monastic college at Shechen was Jamgön Mipham, the Sakyong's predecessor. Shechen Monastery at the time of the Vidyadhara's youth was like Oxford or Cambridge, a great university that everyone aspired to go to.

Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye was born in 1813. His father, or as we'd say in the West, the stepfather who raised him, was not a Buddhist, but a practitioner of Bön, the native religion of Tibet. Historians suspect this influenced Jamgön Kongtrül's non-sectarian approach. He genuinely wanted to find the heart of every tradition along with preserving what was unique in each tradition. As a child he loved to dress like a monk and played by performing rituals. He learned the alphabet as soon as he saw it. Details like these are seen differently in the Buddhist world. For example, being able to read with little effort is not a sign that a child is simply smart or naturally gifted. It means that the child has inherited strong positive habitual tendencies and aspirations from prior lives.

As a youth, even before he'd practiced intensively, Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye had great faith in Padmasambhava and saw him and other great teachers in his dreams. He was well liked because of his gentle demeanor. When Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye was sixteen, a local chieftain who was his employer sent Jamgön Kongtrül to Shechen Monastery to study with a guru there named Shechen Öntul. This was before the arrival of Jamgön Mipham, so

there was no shedra even though it was a famous monastery. While at Shechen he studied a great many topics and soaked them up quickly. At this time he began receiving empowerments and teachings on terma. This was, and still is, quite normal at any Nyingma institution. The Könchok Chidu, which His Eminence bestowed the other day, was among the first termas Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye received at Shechen.

Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye took full ordination at the age of 20, and at 21 the local chieftain who'd sent him to Shechen insisted he go to Palpung Monastery. Palpung was presided over by the great Kagyü teacher, Tai Situ Pema Nyinche Wangpo (1774-1853). Önrul Rinpoche sent Jamgön Kongtrül to Palpung with the advice, 'Don't become sectarian.' At Palpung Jamgön Kongtrül furthered his studies immensely and received many, many Kagyü and Nyingma teachings from Situ Pema Nyinche Wangpo and other teachers. By this time he had also begun to study medicine. When requested what meditation deity would be best to practice, Situ Rinpoche told Jamgön Kongtrül to practice White Tara, the feminine aspect of compassion with a strong connection with long-life and vitality. After this, Jamgön Kongtrül had a very successful retreat on White Tara in the Jonang tradition. Although the Jonang School of Tibetan Buddhism was thought destroyed by the Cultural Revolution, in recent years several Jonang monasteries were found to have survived the devastation in Eastern Tibet.

By his mid-twenties Jamgön Kongtrül had done many retreats on a variety of yidams and had begun teaching. He was such a good scholar that the 14th Karmapa, Thekchok Dorje (1798-1868), insisted that Jamgön Kongtrül teach him Sanskrit. His name, Kongtrül, came from being recognized as the rebirth of a former student of Tai Situ Rinpoche, named Kongpo Bamtang Tulku. The prior incarnation's name became contracted to Kongtrül by using the first syllables of the first and third names. *Kon* is short for Kongpo. *Trul* (with a pronunciation change) is short for *tülku*, which means emanation or enlightened manifestation. *Lodrö Thaye* means Limitless Intellect, and is the name Jamgön Kongtrül received when taking the bodhisattva vow, the vow to liberate all beings from suffering. *Jamgön* means gentle protector and is a name for Manjushri, the bodhisattva of wisdom.

In his late twenties, Jamgön Kongtrül started a long retreat in a hermitage above Palpung. It began as a three-year retreat, but soon extended to the rest of his life. He only came out of retreat in order to teach, join intensive group practices, mediate in wars or disputes, or in order to benefit beings in some specific way. Although they'd met about eight years earlier, Jamgön Kongtrül and Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo began working intensively together around the time Kongtrül was 36 years old. They both had the same desire to go beyond the sectarianism that had caused the deterioration of understanding and good relations between the many different schools of Buddhism as well as between Buddhism and Bön. Together with Chogyur Lingpa

## THE GREAT RIVER OF BLESSINGS

they collected and exchanged whatever teachings they could. Though the seeds were already present in the unbiased attitudes of their teachers, the relationship between Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye and Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo formally began the Rime movement, a renaissance of unbiased teaching and transmission that continues to this day.

For many years Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo urged Jamgön Kongtrül to create the *Five Great Treasuries*. These original texts and collections preserve the essence of the vast dharma traditions of Tibet, and are the quintessential expression of the Rime movement, no pun intended. The Rinchen Terdzö is the largest of the *Five Great Treasures*. In the West, the best known of the five is the *Treasury Of Knowledge*. It is a massive ten-part presentation of all objects or topics one could learn about in the dharma, starting with the variety of Buddhist cosmologies and moving from there to describe the appearance of the Buddha, the various schools of dharma, the classical sciences, and all aspects of training from entering the teachings up to the fruition. Everything is described in an appreciative way from multiple perspectives. The last three of the *Five Great Treasures* are the 8-volume *Tantric Treasury Of The Kagyü Vajrayana Instructions*, the 18-volume *Treasury Of Spiritual Advice*, and the 20-volume *Treasury Of Extensive Teachings*. Two of Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye's other major works are *The Compendium Of All Sadhanas* and *The Compendium Of All Tantras*. Jamgön Kongtrül also wrote a large number of smaller works, some of which are also very influential.

We will pick up on Jamgön Kongtrül's life in a later entry.

## The Shrine Room And The Quiet

December 22nd



Here is a picture of the shrine hall, the way it usually looked just after His Eminence had seated himself before the abhishekas started. At the time of the photograph there were nearly fifty Westerners in the room, more than usual because of arrivals for the Ripa community's annual Dzogchen Retreat, which was planned to coincide with the Rinchen Terdzö. More guests were expected in the coming days.

The Dzogchen Retreat went through a metamorphosis when it became possible to have the reading transmission along with the empowerments. At first, it seemed that visa complications would prevent Lhunpo Rinpoche from attending the Rinchen Terdzö. At that point, the plan was for the Dzogchen Retreat to have talks in the morning before the abhishekas in the afternoon. However, when Lhunpo Rinpoche got his visa at the last minute,

the lungs became possible, and the Dzogchen Retreat talks were shifted to the evening after dinner and the empowerments. People coming for a short time were encouraged to do their daily practice in the mornings rather than attending the lungs.

Tibetan culture is impressive in the way that it works from the top down. We started with a general, but ragged, sense of quiet a few weeks ago. Then, in the last few days, the noise got out of hand with a babbling toddler and an upwelling of chatter from the young monks in the shrine room and the lay people on the veranda. At that point, Namkha Drimed Rinpoche sharply addressed the issue during a talk at the end of the day. After that, the rinpoches and senior teachers also became more direct, and the sangha members camped out on the veranda became noticeably quieter. The process reminded me of how Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche worked with energy getting out of control at his programs. He let unbalanced situations get to the point where everyone saw them clearly, and then he'd abruptly cut in and start fresh.

In the photograph above, I spliced six photos together to show the view of the shrine room from my seat. You will see that a big red curtain is drawn shut around the empowerment shrine. This is because we had not seen the mandala yet. Mandala is a word that can refer to a complete representation of the world, the world itself, or a self-contained environment that is like its own world. For example, we could talk about the mandala at the Ripa House, the guesthouse next to the monastery. This mandala included the guesthouse building itself, Jigme Namgyal (the hard-working manager), Tashi and Suraj (the cooks), the three young women from the village who helped with chores, the various Ripa and Shambhala sangha guests, and Ruby (Jigme Namgyal's four month old puppy who barked a lot when she was alone). Those were the main components of the guesthouse mandala.

In the case of an empowerment, there are several mandalas. The most obvious one is on the shrine. The shrine mandala is a symbolic presentation of the various attributes of a meditation practice: the deity, its retinue, symbols of the mind in meditation, and so on. Several shrine mandalas were readied before the start of each day during the Rinchen Terdzö, one for each empowerment. Every one of these mandalas was a symbolic representation of how the world appears to awakened mind. Just as there are as many ways to see the world as there are people, there are countless different mandalas to depict an enlightened vision of the world.

In an empowerment, the mandala is often concealed until the teacher has symbolically entered the students into that particular meditation practice. At that point, the shrine will be displayed. Then the teacher explains the mandala in detail and brings the practitioners from the initial entry into the teachings to final stages of the path. An excellent explanation of a shrine, its symbolism, and their relationship to a practice can be found in the presentation of

the Vajrayogini mandala in Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's book, *The Heart Of The Buddha*.

## 50 Unexpected Empowerments

December 23rd

The final Dzogchen Retreat guests arrived today. The total number of Western students grew to about sixty and made a formidable block in the shrine room. Most of that number came from the Ripa community in the West. There were about fifteen Shambhala students in Orissa for the retreat. Three of them were late arrivals who stayed until the end of the Rinchen Terdzö: Jinpa, a Western monk from Gampo Abbey who came to serve as the Sakyong's kusung in the monastery; Theresa Laurie who arrived during the second abhisheka on the first day; and Alexandra Kalinine who came to Orissa three days ago. Shambhala sangha members, Frank and Katrin Stelzel from Köln, and Siobhan Pathe from Hamburg, came to India to attend the Dzogchen Retreat itself.

During the first weeks of the Rinchen Terdzö it was difficult to sort out what empowerments would happen each day. To know what was happening, we relied on a list written for the Rinchen Terdzö that His Holiness Penor Rinpoche bestowed in 2001. This list did not always mirror what happened in Orissa, so we amended it based on a digital photograph of the Tibetan list that the monastery posted each day. Usually we were able to sort out the differences before the empowerments started each afternoon.

However, today we realized something was greatly amiss because His Eminence started a series of fifty abhishekas that had been omitted at Penor Rinpoche's Rinchen Terdzö. All of these empowerments were based on termas found by Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye. The 15th Karmapa, Khakyab Dorje (1871-1922), authored their empowerment rituals. I am not sure, but I think these termas were discovered when Jamgön Kongtrül was in his sixties, just after he first bestowed the Rinchen Terdzö. Later we learned that it was possible to condense certain related empowerments and that this was what Penor Rinpoche had done; fifty had been condensed into one empowerment.

## Winter Sangha Retreat Begins

December 23rd

A talk by Jigme Rinpoche this evening proclaimed the start of the Dzogchen Retreat. Usually the Padma Ling's annual winter retreat is held in Europe, but because of the Rinchen Terdzö, the winter retreat was moved to Orissa. This may be the first group retreat joining our sanghas on Ripa land, just as 2008 Gesar festival at Dechen Chöling was the first group retreat joining the sanghas on Shambhala land. During the opening talk we learned that Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche would give a presentation later in the program. Jigme Rinpoche also announced that Lhunpo Rinpoche would make his teaching debut during the Dzogchen Retreat too. The news



came as a pleasant surprise because I had been wondering what Lhunpo Rinpoche would be like as a teacher.

The Dzogchen Retreat teachings were given after dinner in the main shrine room at the old monastery complex, which is about a minute's walk from the new monastery complex. The old two-story shrine building is small and



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

stands in a shaded compound with some of the early monastic quarters making a little square around it. It's a peaceful area and a reminder of the humble beginnings for the Tibetans who had fled to India. The old main shrine room is actually the second one built by the Ripas in Orissa. The original temple had bamboo walls, a corrugated steel roof, and an earthen floor.

The shrine room itself took up most of the building. The room was thirty-feet on each side with four columns in the middle that enabled a gallery to let in light from above. In front, behind a wood framed glass panel, was the same motif of statues as in the main temple: Shakyamuni Buddha in seated meditation flanked by Thousand-Armed Avalokiteshvara on his left, and Padmasambhava on his right. These statues were carved and painted simply. They filled the space with a gentle radiance. The walls had no frescoes, and everything was slightly faded from decades of candle and incense smoke. It was like a shrine room in Tibet except that much of the structure was built with concrete, rather than with wood and rocks. How difficult it must have been for Namkha Drimed Rinpoche and his disciples to leave home with such finality and then to rebuild everything here.

The Padma Ling sangha at the Dzogchen Retreat was an international group. The students came from Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Canada, the United States, and Russia. The packed shrine room also included English-speaking practitioners from Tibet, Nepal, and Bhutan. Before Jigme Rinpoche arrived, preparatory remarks were made in French, Spanish, and English. The sound system included additional equipment for simultaneous French and Spanish translation. Several students eagerly awaited the start of the talk with sparkling blue earphones in hand.

During his welcoming remarks, Jigme Rinpoche said that much of what he wanted to tell us was already included in the letter he sent out last week, but he added a few points of

interest. He said that one of the main conditions that made an empowerment possible was the fact that all of us have buddha nature within us. An abhisheka does not add anything new, but instead clears the stains away from the purity that is already there. Jigme Rinpoche explained that this related to the symbolism of being washed at the start of all empowerments. Having faith in our own buddha nature, in our own pure being, is one of the requisites to receiving an empowerment. It's the way to open up.

### Padmasambhava Is Everywhere

December 24th



Photograph by Walker Blaine

Morning fog resumed after a few days of clear skies. With or without the fog, the reading transmissions were broadcast from speakers on the monastery rooftops starting at 6:40 am, filling our little valley with the voice of Lhunpo Rinpoche. The logic was that people outside the shrine room could still receive the transmission even if they were working on tormas or performing other jobs. There was also a speaker set up in the old monastery next door so that Westerners practicing there could hear the lung too.

Lhunpo Rinpoche will teach tomorrow on the nine yanas, the progressive stages of understanding, practice, and realization laid out in the Nyingma tradition. He is about 32 years old, the youngest son of Namkha Drimed

Rinpoche. Presently, he lives in Toronto, Canada with his wife Khandro Chime, who arrived in Orissa a few days ago. He studied for nine years at His Holiness Penor Rinpoche's monastic college at Namdroling Monastery in Mysore, India, and has already received the Rinchen Terdzö three times. Lhunpo Rinpoche was visibly joyful throughout the empowerments and often played with the lamas when he brought them this or that vase or icon. He had the look of someone who practiced a lot.

This afternoon we received twelve abhishekas, a new record. They were part of the series of the fifty empowerments related to the *Seven-line Supplication To Padmasambhava*. The *Seven-line Supplication* is written below, but you will see it is missing a crucial piece of recurring punctuation called a 'tertsek,' a terma mark. A tertsek usually appears as a pair of stacked circles with a horizontal line between them and is used show the end of every line in a terma.

HUM

In the Northwest of the land of Uddiyana,  
 On a blooming lotus flower,  
 You have attained supreme, wondrous siddhi.  
 You are renowned as Padmakara,  
 Surrounded by your retinue of many dakinis.  
 We practice following your example.  
 Please approach and grant your blessing.

GURU PADMA SIDDHI HUM

*Translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee.*

*The Seven-Line Supplication* is among the most well known supplications in Tibetan Buddhism. It was written by the dakinis to call Padmasambhava when 500 arrogant religious extremists who were skilled in black magic threatened the early Indian Buddhist university, Nalanda. In that era, religious feuds were settled on the debating ground with the loser and his or her followers obliged to switch to the winner's philosophical position. However, the extremists at Nalanda were not above using sorcery to achieve their aims. Padmasambhava was renowned both for his learning and the magical force of his meditative attainment. The scholars of Nalanda supplicated him with this chant, and Padmasambhava came and saved the monastery.

Later, when Padmasambhava arrived in Tibet, he gave this chant to King Trisong Detsen and his subjects. *The Seven-line Supplication* is included in many termas, often at the start. We heard it sung by His Eminence dozens of times during the abhishekas over the last three weeks. The supplication was chanted so often because we were in the guru yoga section and many of the empowerments were for guru yogas to Padmasambhava. The chant was woven into the section of the guru yoga empowerments where the teacher calls the deity, in this case Padmasambhava, to come and bless the disciples.

The other day an exasperated friend said something like, "What is it with this tradition? Everything is all about Padmasambhava!" It was really true. Padmasambhava's presence was overwhelming, unstoppable, and unavoidable. We sat in a building and shrine room modeled after Padmasambhava's pure realm, Copper Colored Mountain. All 800 of us sang his mantras for twenty or thirty minutes every day during the final blessings at the end of the abhishekas. Everyone was reciting his mantra, which is like the condensed essence of his name and energy, 100,000 times during the Rinchen Terdzö. We received dozens of empowerments for termas devoted to solely to him. He really was—and is—everywhere we go.

In such situations one is forced to contemplate why this man, an Indian, is so revered by the Tibetans. They cry out to the Buddha, but they cry out to Padmasambhava a lot louder. I think this is because Padmasambhava really, really cherished the Tibetans, and in turn they took on and protected the Buddhist tantric teachings that were soon to vanish from India. Padmasambhava first made sure the dharma was secure in Tibet, and then he did everything possible to enable the dharma to survive as long as possible through the terma teachings.

I confess that before coming to the Rinchen Terdzö I had not really understood that without Padmasambhava we would not now have the tantric teachings, the terma teachings, the Shambhala teachings, or the two Sakyongs. Once I understood this important fact, supplicating Padmasambhava became like watering the roots of a huge tree, nurturing a connection that made everything possible. I was asking that connection to grow inside me and nourish everyone in the midst of this chaotic and difficult life.

### Transmission

December 25th

Namkha Drimed Rinpoche was indefatigable. It was amazing to watch the joy and energy that he exuded during the abhishekas. At the same time everyone worried because he was working so hard. Yesterday the Sakyong said that at one point they tried to get His Eminence to abbreviate the abhishekas; there are ways to cut corners here and there. His Eminence refused to even consider it. He wanted to bestow the Rinchen Terdzö the way he had received it from the Vidyadhara. Every time I tried to express this to someone today I felt like crying.

### 34 Empowerments In Brief

December 25th

Today we received 25 empowerments, a new record. Here are the first 34 of the 50 abhishekas related to the Seven-line Supplication followed by an explanation of each set:

- 3 abhishekas of the three kayas
- 4 abhishekas of the four kayas
- 5 abhishekas of the five wisdoms
- 6 abhishekas of the six realms
- 7 abhishekas of the seven successive buddhas
- 9 abhishekas of the nine stages of the path (8 manifestations of the Padmasambhava and one more)

As mentioned earlier, the kayas are a way to classify different aspects of awakened mind. The unfindable essence of the mind is a kaya. The mind's manifestations, whether a pure body

made of light or a physical body of a realized being like a buddha, is also a kaya. These three kayas can be presented as four kayas by presenting the three together with their unity. The five wisdoms empowerments connect manifestations of Padmasambhava to the five wisdoms, which are related to the transformation of our five basic emotional energies (passion, aggression, delusion, pride, and jealousy) into their inherent purity.

The famous teaching diagram, the Wheel of Life, traditionally painted at the entrance to a Tibetan monastery, depicts our experiences as a cycle through six realms or manifestations of samsaric, unenlightened being. These realms are both outer realms that we share with others and inner realms that we go through on our own. However, heaven and hell primarily depend on us. In the end, they are not something outside of our own mind. Each of the six realms contains a buddha and a corresponding manifestation of a Padmasambhava, which represent opportunities to wake up in the midst of all our various sufferings.

One good thing to know about Padmasambhava is how he relates to Shakyamuni, the buddha of our era. In the *Mahaparinirvana Sutra*, the Buddha stated that eight years after his passing from this world an enlightened teacher would come to teach the highest teachings and greatly benefit beings. The Buddha said Padmasambhava would be even more enlightened than he was, meaning that their realizations were equal, but that Padmasambhava's expression of enlightenment would be extraordinary. The Buddha called Padmasambhava, 'The Buddha Of Three Times'; the three times are the past, the present, and the future. Another key point in the tradition is that while the Buddha primarily taught the hinayana and mahayana, Padmasambhava primarily taught the vajrayana or tantric teachings.

Today's empowerments included a series of abhishekas for seven Padmasambhavas that related to the seven successive buddhas. These seven buddhas correspond with different periods of time in a Buddhism's vast approach to history. Chogyur Lingpa had a vision that a Padmasambhava would always accompany a Buddha in this world. The seven buddhas are the three buddhas of the three previous kalpas, the three prior buddhas of our own kalpa, and Shakyamuni who is the buddha of our era during the kalpa. A kalpa is a huge stretch of time, the period it takes for a universe to come into being, abide, depart, and have a gap before coming back again. His Eminence Tai Situ Rinpoche once explained that kalpa was like the life cycle of a planet. Shakyamuni is the 4th of the 1,000 buddhas who will appear in our kalpa.

At the end of the day, we received nine abhishekas that related the nine yanas to the eight manifestations of Padmasambhava plus himself in the form of Yishin Norbu (The Wish-Fulfilling Jewel). The eight manifestations can be connected with eight phases in Padmasambhava's life and are chronicled experientially in Trungpa Rinpoche's book, *Crazy Wisdom*.



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

This evening Lhunpo Rinpoche gave his talk about the nine yanas. He spoke in Tibetan and was translated by the very knowledgeable Ripa sangha member from Minsk, Nickolai Almerov. Lhunpo Rinpoche taught with a soft and gentle voice beneath which lay a palpable eagerness to transmit the dharma. It was a treat to hear him starting to teach Westerners. He was peaceful, backed by the power of a quickly

rising sun. The short talk covered the basic framework of the nine yanas and ended with him answering questions mostly about the vajrayana vows and *samayas*, the commitments connected with receiving empowerments.

## Food At The Rinchen Terdzö

December 26th

What follows is a short study of food at the Rinchen Terdzö. I chose a secular topic because of the holidays. It is hard to make any definitive cultural statements about cooking in relation to the Rinchen Terdzö because of the effect of world cuisine upon the modern Tibetan kitchen. However, it is possible that two foods have remained constant staples at the Rinchen Terdzö since the nineteenth century: momos, or Tibetan dumplings, and salted butter tea. These two menu items are unavoidable in the Tibetan world.

A food that has definitely been a part of the Rinchen Terdzö since its inception is *tsampa*, ground roasted barley flour. Tsampa is usually mixed with butter and sugar to make a *torma*, which is then consecrated, and sometimes eaten, during an empowerment. Torma dough can be rolled into little balls of medicine that are distributed as part of long-life ceremonies such as those in the Rinchen Terdzö. Other foods appearing in the shrine room included the yellow tea rolls that looked like unsplit hamburger buns, and, during the feast at the end of the day, cookies, candies, and blessed liquor that was mixed with a lot of orange soda. The liquor was *arak*, something like barley vodka, but in Orissa it was often made from corn.

Outside the shrine room, culinary possibilities opened up a bit. The Canteen, as the store was called, was run by a cheerful and energetic Tibetan man named Thonga and his family. The Canteen sometimes sold take-out vegetarian momos and ‘eggrolls’, a thin bread wrapped around a fried egg and some vegetables which were lathered in a special sauce—quite tasty and filling. The Canteen menu was usually made up of Indian fare, rice, dhal, and so on, along with a dense, homemade bread. Thonga also sold candy, pens, paper, and soda to a steady

stream of monks along with the lay Tibetans and Westerners at the event. Occasionally we spotted Tibetan or Western children wandering around the monastery with neon pink cotton candy (which came in small plastic packages). Chicken momos and beer were available off the monastery grounds at a small restaurant at the edge of camp four.

At the guesthouse, the kitchen usually prepared Indian food, noodle dishes, and a lot of fresh vegetables, along with the occasional momo meal. His Eminence said that the Westerners should eat a lot of fresh vegetables so they were prominent on our menu. All of our vegetables were grown organically at the Tibetan settlement, with the exception of broccoli, which was sometimes brought from Berampur. We ate a lot of okra, chapattis, and we also sampled the occasional ting-mo (steamed bread dumpling) along with many styles of dhal with white rice. One vegetable I'd never tasted before was the deep green *kati*, which when sliced in half-moons looks like the back of a stegosaurus. Kati means 'bitter', which it certainly was. It was easiest to eat when it was fried with something that turned it bright red. We heard from many people that kati was a remedy for hepatitis.

Today we nearly finished remaining abhishekas for Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye's terms related to the Seven-Line Supplication. The abhishekas at the end of the day didn't fit into the neat categories we had in the preceding days, however they emphasized connections between Padmasambhava and specific groups of gurus (48, 50, or 108) or between Padmasambhava and specific manifestations of enlightened activity. We also received empowerments for four wrathful manifestations of Padmasambhava.

The evening teachings with Lhunpo Rinpoche covered the eight freedoms and ten favorable circumstances or conditions. The freedoms and favorable conditions point out the good fortune of being able to study and practice the dharma. They do this by highlighting the outer and inner conditions will support or cut off our path to enlightenment. Without a teacher who has followed the path of practice and realization, for example, we would be unable to genuinely enter the path ourselves.

## Offerings To Those Near And Far

December 27th

At tea today, Alan Goldstein and his wife Semo<sup>5</sup> Palmo made an elaborate offering to the Buddha, Padmasambhava, Avalokiteshvara, His Eminence, the Sakying, and everyone attending the Rinchen Terdzö. As I mentioned earlier, the cycle of generosity is a regular feature of life in the Tibetan community. During the Rinchen Terdzö, people generally gave

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<sup>5</sup> Semo is the honorific word for daughter in Tibetan. Semo Palmo is one of the four daughters of His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche.



money only to the monastics, but once in a while the donor gave a nominal amount (maybe 30 rupees, enough to buy an egg roll and a little candy at the store, less than 75 cents in the West) to the lay people, including the Western students. This was always an interesting moment. It provoked me to engage my ideas about generosity, the sangha at large, monasticism, and having wealth. Some Westerners immediately wanted to give the money back, while others were happy to make an offering later and used their gift to buy something later on.

Several years ago I was on pilgrimage in Bodhgaya, practicing each day under the Bodhi Tree (the place of the Buddha's enlightenment) a few days before His Holiness Karmapa Ugyen Trinley Dorje's first visit there. There was a steady stream of practitioners from all schools of Buddhism along with scores of tourists and Hindu pilgrims rolling through every day. Late one morning, a large, impoverished Indian family came to pay homage at this sacred place. It was clear they were Hindus because they devoutly walked counter-clockwise around the Bodhi tree. At the back of the group was an older woman wearing a worn and faded yellow shawl. I imagined she was a grandmother in the family. She saw me, gently placed a rupee in my lap, and prostrated before me. I had two, nearly simultaneous reactions. One was fear because I had the thought there was no way I could really help this person who would be in and out of my life in an instant. The other reaction was totally non-verbal. The core of my heart involuntarily burst open with love. It was as though this moment itself was the real gift to me and I have pondered it many times since then.

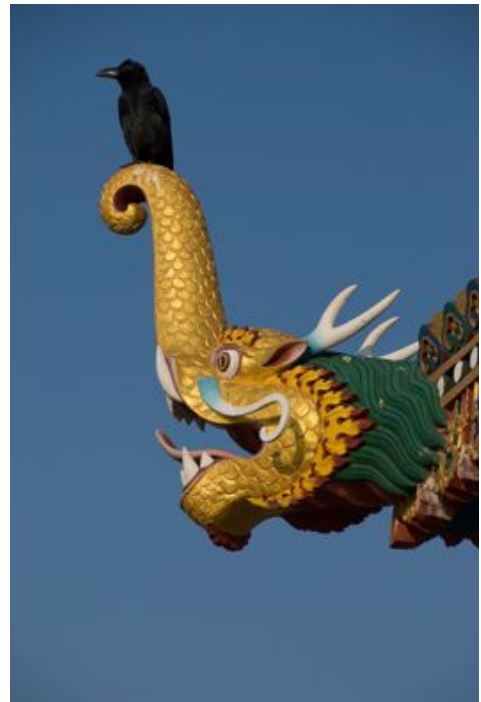
In Asia it is common for practitioners to be supported by communal generosity. Many of the times that I have meditated for more than one session at a holy place in Asia, people I didn't know have given me gifts. Sometimes I'd open my eyes at the end of a visualization, and I'd find that some fruit had been placed in front of me. At one site near Dharamsala, people learned I enjoyed bananas, so I was given a bag of them every day when I arrived at the temple gate. A seasoned traveler once said to me that Asians understand karma far better than we do in the West. They know that even a small gift or connection will nurture a link that can grow later on. In Tibet it is common to see pilgrims making aspirations and putting tiny amounts of money in front of every shrine they can at monasteries and pilgrimage places. It's a wonderful thing to make offerings to people and situations you may never meet again because it helps both parties make connections to kindness and goodness happening in the world.

The electricity was out for most of the morning, which made it impossible for the monastery to publish their list of the afternoon's abhishekas. Consequently, one of the chöpons asked for our list. A few days ago, after working through the confusion of the 50 extra empowerments, Patricia started producing a polished Tibetan-English abhisheka list every day for the Sakyong and the Westerners here. She based her work on the empowerment list



from His Holiness Penor Rinpoche's most recent Rinchen Terdzö and on Peter Robert's list of the empowerments given during His Eminence Tai Situ Rinpoche's Rinchen Terdzö in 2006. As she had been doing earlier on, she revised her work by hand based on the monastery's Tibetan language list before she sent a hand-edited draft of the empowerment list to the Sakyong and circulated her work among the Western students.

We received the last of the inner peaceful practices of the three kayas today. The two concluding empowerments were an abhisheka combining the fifty empowerments for the Seven-Line Supplication into one, and an abhisheka of Vajrayogini as the guru. Then we moved to a section of empowerments for auxiliary practices related to this section of abhishekas. These included empowerments for practices that focused on teachers in various traditions, connecting each of them with Padmasambhava, and included practices of the second Karmapa, Virupa, Padampa Sangye, Maitriyogin, and Dombipa. These five came from a terma cycle discovered by Rigdzin Mingyur Dorje, who was born at the end 16th century and passed away in 1607 at the age of 23. Yet in that short time he revealed 13 volumes of termas. Hundreds of his discoveries were sky termas, objects and teachings found in space. A great many of his discoveries are included in the Rinchen Terdzö. He was so amazing that his teacher, Karma Chagme, wrote a biography of him.



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

This evening we had a detailed talk on karma, the cause-result relationship in all actions, from Tulku Kunkyang Rinpoche, one of the five main recipients of the Rinchen Terdzö. Tulku Kunkyang Rinpoche is a nephew of His Eminence and in his third year at the Mindrolling Shedra in North India.

## Manifestations Of The Guru

December 28th

The abhishekas for the secret guru yoga practices, the wrathful manifestations of the guru, began this afternoon. Secret means not ordinarily noticeable, and wrathful refers to how enlightened compassion can manifest sharply if we disregard the peaceful messages of wakefulness. When Padmasambhava came to Nalanda to stop the black magicians who threatened the university, he manifested in a form of wrathful compassion called The Lion's Roar, Senge Dradrok. In this form, Padmasambhava is red, fiery, and holding a vajra and an

iron scorpion. The heart of a manifestation like this is love and realization, but outwardly it is terrifying.

One of the terma practices bestowed today was for Guru Drakpo Tsal, another very wrathful form of Padmasambhava. This particular Guru Trakpo Tsal abhisheka was part of a terma cycle of guru yoga practices revealed by Rigdzin Gökyi Demtruchen. This tertön's name means something like 'The one with the plume of vulture feathers.' *Rigdzin* means 'holder of awareness', or vidyadhara in Sanskrit, and denotes the complete realization of dzogchen. Rigdzin Gökyi Demtruchen was born in 1337 and lived to the age of 71. He gained his name because he had what looked like three vulture feathers growing out of the top of his head when he was 12 years old. Two more grew when he was in his mid-twenties. This was amazing to everyone and marked him as a particularly special tertön because Padmasambhava's crown has vulture feathers on its peak.

Rigdzin Gökyi Demtruchen is part of a group of tertöns called The Three Supreme Emanations, three tertöns who were emanations of the body, speech, and mind of Padmasambhava. Rigdzin Demtruchen (as he is sometimes known) was the emanation or embodiment of Padmasambhava's mind. Guru Chökyi Wangchuk was the tertön who was an emanation of Padmasambhava's speech, and Nyangral Nyima Öser was the emanation of Padmasambhava's body, the aspect of his enlightened form. Short biographies of these last two tertöns appear later in this book.

Rigdzin Demtruchen discovered a large terma collection that is now known as the Northern Termas because it was discovered in northern Tibet. The earliest termas were found in the south, where Buddhism first took root in the land of snows. Dudjom Rinpoche, in his *History Of The Nyingma Lineage* explains that the Northern Termas are like a minister who beneficially serves all of Tibet and Kham because the Northern Termas contain a complete range of practices and teachings for taking care of a kingdom. These include everything from the most profound instructions on mind and meditation, to rituals for increasing the spread of the teachings, ending epidemics, pacifying civil wars, and so on. The Northern Terma were said to be among the main practices of King Trisong Detsen. Interestingly, Rigdzin Demtruchen was the rebirth of Dorje Dudjom of Nanam, who was one of the ministers King Trisong Detsen sent to request Padmasambhava to come to Tibet. The Northern Termas also pointed out hidden sacred places in Tibet, places where dharma practice can be particularly strong. Later in his life, Rigdzin Demtruchen's activity opened up sacred sites in Sikkim as well.

Rigdzin Demtruchen's termas and teachings are extremely famous and highly praised. He wrote a three-volume set of texts on dzogchen called the *Gongpa Zangthal, Unimpeded*

*Realization* that is one of the three most detailed and meaningful presentations of dzogchen teachings. The other two presentations of dzogchen that have the same stature as the *Gongpa Zangthal* are the *Longchen Nyingtig* and the *Nyingtig Yabshi*. The *Gongpa Zangthal* contains the famous dzogchen text, *The Samantabhadra Aspiration*. The reading transmissions from Rigdzin Demtruchen's sons, consort, and disciples have all continued to the present day. Many of the practitioners in his lineage have achieved the rainbow body; a sign of which can be that a person leaves no physical remains behind at death.

Last night, the Sakyong gave a lively, engaging, and practical talk to the Western sangha. He started it by telling everyone how he came to request the Rinchen Terdzö from His Eminence, the history of the Rinchen Terdzö with the Vidyadhara, and how things were going in Orissa so far. After that he went on to give us a sense of how to be in this situation, three months of teachings in a challenging environment. From there he went on to discuss the relationship between view and practice in the context of the Rinchen Terdzö.

There was a poignant moment in the middle of the talk when the Sakyong said that what he admired most about the Vidyadhara was his courage. He said that the older generation of Tibetans (he gave His Eminence as an example) has incredible strength and bravery. He encouraged us to develop those qualities in ourselves.

At one point the Sakyong was asked a question about communicating through symbolism, which is a big part of the Rinchen Terdzö and vajrayana practice altogether. As he answered that it was possible to communicate with symbolism, the electricity abruptly cut out and left us in pitch darkness. The coincidence filled the room with laughter. We listened as the Sakyong continued his talk in the dark without amplification. While he explained that the various manifestations of the deities and other symbols were meant to communicate our primordial nature, the lights abruptly sprung back on and an animal outside let out a bizarre yelp. This again filled the room with laughter.

## The Juncture Of Boredom

December 29th

An evolving question in Orissa was about how to receive so many abhishekas knowing that it was unlikely one would actually do many of the practices from the Rinchen Terdzö in this lifetime. The answer was simple on the surface and richly layered underneath. The basic answer was that all one needed to do was have devotion during the empowerments, and fulfill the recitation requirements of 100,000 mantras of Padmasambhava (the guru who embodies all the gurus) and 100,000 mantras of Vajrasattva (the buddha who embodies one's indestructible purity and who is relied on as the means to purify negativity).



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

However, telling oneself just to have faith and do the mantras started to seem superficial, especially sitting in middle of the empowerments for weeks on end. The background to this skepticism was an instruction many of us have heard over the years, 'Do not request empowerments for practices you don't plan to do.' Because of this, it became important to examine the situation in Orissa more closely. After sitting in the

shrine room for more than three weeks and participating in well over 200 empowerments, I started to relax and opened my mind to the possibility that there was a context when receiving a lot of abhishekas had more to offer than just a credential or ego aggrandizement.

The crux of this had to do with repetition and boredom. Whether sitting on a cushion, reciting a mantra, or struggling to memorize a text, the aim of repetition is to stabilize the mind and move it towards greater openness and better habits like patience and generosity. Abhishekas in the West are infrequent and tend to be high points in contrast to one's daily life. However, at the Rinchen Terdzö abhishekas were the norm. Because of this, one could experience various forms of agitation and approach what the Vidyadhara called cool boredom, the phase of boredom when one loses interest in mental fidgeting. This is the point when genuine curiosity arises. Repetition, when done with the right attitude or view, will start to provoke insight. Because empowerments in the West have always been peak experiences for me, I never considered that the principle of cool boredom could apply to the process of receiving abhisheka until I went to Orissa.

The connection I am making is between being at the empowerments of the Rinchen Terdzö and the cool boredom that one can experience during an intensive practice program like a one-month *dathiin*, a group retreat focusing on sitting meditation. At the Rinchen Terdzö, the repetition aspects, what one brought one's mind back to, instead of the breath, posture and so forth, were thinking of the teacher, contemplating virtue, and relaxing the mind into the environment of the empowerments. The biggest difference between the Rinchen Terdzö and a dathun or sesshin was that the practice was participatory in terms of relating with a teacher, and the practice session was constantly changing form. Within that, there was time to actively explore what it meant to be open to the lineage and the teachings. It was wonderful to see the Sakyong doing this every day in the front of the room. Maybe this description of slowing down in the environment of the abhishekas doesn't read as something special on paper, but

personally speaking, it was a big deal.

During the Dzogchen Retreat, our schedule was tight; the evening talks ended around ten o'clock. Last night's talk was Jigme Rinpoche's first after his introductory remarks a few days ago. The topic was a general presentation of vajrayana view and practice. It turned out to be a tour-de-force of useful information. Jigme Rinpoche's final planned for tomorrow.

## Hidden Energy

December 30th

During his talk last night, Jigme Rinpoche explained that the wrathful guru practices are about getting into hidden corners of the mind, places we don't always look at. He said wrathful energy is unpredictable. As he spoke about this, I considered my experience of late and realized that my mental gossip and dreams have been wilder than usual over the last three days. The night before last I dreamed of being on my deathbed with sangha members practicing in my room. I was sad to be leaving this world. The memory of this dream lingered throughout the day and provoked me to open up more.

Yesterday and today's empowerments were for Guru Trakpo and Dorje Trolö, two very wrathful forms of Padmasambhava. Dorje Trolö is a central feature of the Vidyadhara's terma, *The Sadhana Of Mahamudra*, discovered in Bhutan at Taktsang, the retreat cave where Padmasambhava practiced before entering Tibet. Those who know this sadhana (performed every new and full moon at Shambhala Centers everywhere) will be delighted to know that we said the mantra HUM HUM HUM many times during the day. The 5th Dalai Lama wrote one of the Dorje Trolö empowerments. I have grown fond of seeing his name on the empowerment lists.

## An Eventful Day, Relatively Speaking

December 31st

The Dzogchen Retreat concluded today, as did the Western calendar year. Just before lunch, while Patricia and I were working on the blog and empowerment list, a knock came on our door. Pema, the solidly built secretary of Jigme Rinpoche, was inviting all the Westerners to the monastery steps for a group photo with His Eminence, the other rinpoches, and the monastics. Everyone rushed out of the guesthouse and over to the monastery for a long session of picture taking in the sun with His Eminence, the Sakyong, Jigme Rinpoche, Lhunpo Rinpoche, and Tulku Kunkhyab Rinpoche. It was stiflingly hot. First, all the monks surrounded the teachers for photos on the steps, then all the Westerners scrunched into the photo at the edges, and then all the monks stepped aside for photographs of the teachers with the Westerner students. At the end of the session, Ripa-Mukpo family photos were taken in the shade of the veranda.

The abhishekas in the afternoon were shorter than usual, but the tea was much longer because formal offerings were made by the Western sangha who attended the Dzogchen Retreat. Everyone was dressed in their best although our faces were smeared with empowerment substances. After a formal ceremony for the long life of His Eminence, the Westerners had a chance to present khatas to Namkha Drimed Rinpoche at the throne. The day concluded with a few more empowerments and the final blessing ceremony that included His Eminence and the other teachers bringing the tormas and other icons to row after row of us in the shrine room and on the veranda before we did the closing chants.

The Westerners were invited to dinner at the Ripa Ladrang compound before a New Year's Eve party, but at the last minute this changed to dinner in our respective dining areas. Everyone met later at the compound later for the party. The Ripa Ladrang is a two-minute walk from the monastery gates. If done at night, the trip is best made with a flashlight because of the dung left by the sunset migration of cows through the village. The compound is behind a brick wall that runs beside the road, and is accessed through a metal door next to a car gate. Inside are about four two-story houses surrounding a pretty, central garden with enough trees and shrubs to remind one of a tropical jungle.

Coming into Ripa Ladrang from the dark of the street, we were met by appealing Western dance music, bright lights, and a cheerful Tibetan woman offering cups of chang, homemade Tibetan beer. I liked chang a lot by the end of the party. It's a bit sour, sort of like hard apple cider, although it is served warm. It feels like someone could easily drink an enormous quantity of it and not have a hangover. I had a head cold, but it vanished altogether between the time I started drinking chang and when we left the party a few hours later.

It was surreal to be in a garden, dancing to funk and club music, and drinking chang with people from all over the world after 24 days of receiving abhishekas in a monastic environment. Everyone had an incredibly good time and the party went on long after midnight, five and a half hours altogether. I heard that the four Ripa sisters—the Sakyong Wangmo, Semo Sonam, Semo Pede, and Semo Palmo—danced more and more as the evening progressed. The rinpoches took the evening to relax quietly on their own at the start of our first break during the Rinchen Terdzö.

### A Day Off

January 1st

There was not much to say about our first day off. Most of us slept in a bit. The monastery was as silent as silent could be—except for the noise of Jinpa's gyaling lessons in the late morning. People from the Dzogchen Retreat spent their time packing in the morning. It was sad to say goodbye to new and old friends. Frank and Katrin Stelzel were headed for the Kagyü Mönlam

in Bodhgaya and Siobhan Pathe was soon to return to Europe.

One group of Westerners took an excursion to a nearby waterfall. Many people did their laundry in buckets and hung the clothes to dry on the lines provided on the guesthouse and monastery roofs. Kusung Christoph Schönherr divided his time between editing video and guarding the Sakyong's suite at the monastery from three busloads of Indian tourists who wandered through the building trying to open every door they could. Rigon Thupten Mindrolling, the waterfall, and a nearby hot springs were the three major tourist sites in the region, and so Indian tourists, mostly Hindus, visited the abhishekas daily. On most Sunday afternoons, small Western tour groups appeared in the shrine room during the short break after tea. They took lots of pictures.

Today it again struck me how amazing it was that the Vidyadhara received the Rinchen Terdzö when he was 12 years old, and bestowed it for months on end only two years later. What exertion it must have taken. The day off was gladly welcomed.

## The Day Of Seven Bad Omens

January 2nd

After I got up this morning, I noticed my Tibetan datebook called tomorrow, 'The Day Of Ten Auspicious Things Happening Together.' At breakfast we were informed that today was the day of seven bad omens, 'The Seven Demon Day,' and therefore it was a bad time to resume the Rinchen Terdzö. So, we took another day off. Tibetan astrological days along with anniversaries of various important historical events, such as the birth of the Buddha, create an elaborate calendar. Because the Tibetan calendar is lunar, the New Year, *Losar*, can fall weeks before or after the previous *Losar*. Different monasteries can even run on different calendars, and celebrate the New Year on a different day. Some calendars specify the good and bad days to cut your hair, good days to hang prayer flags, and so on.

There was a noisy commotion outside the guesthouse after breakfast. It was hard to make it out what was happening when a group of us bound for the monastery, first walked into the bright sunlight. After our eyes adjusted, we saw small groups of monks tending brushfires in the gardens around the building. Around twenty smiling monastics fanned four or five crackling, yellow fires in the hot sun in front of our home. This seemed to be a normal part of gardening at the monastery, and the group of us continued on our quest for the morning, to visit the rooftop Gesar Temple.

When arrived at the monastery we discovered the chöpons were busy making more tormas in the torma room. The head chöpon, Lama Tenzin, was studying the upcoming abhishekas in his room off the veranda. Crews of monks were in the courtyard preparing large





Gesar Shrine Room  
Photograph by Walker Blaine

bamboo poles and rebar to go the upper deck of the monastery in order to build scaffolding and do the finishing work necessary for the *sertok*. Sertok are golden roof ornaments that attract wealth and beautify a building like a monastery. There are sertok on the roof of the Boulder Shambhala Center. The formal

ceremony to empower the sertok was two days away.

The main shrine room of the monastery was three stories tall over the central golden Buddha statue. Above this, on the roof, was the massive Gesar Temple, which looks like it could easily seat 200 people. The frescos were not yet painted, but several remarkable statues stood on the wide marble shrine at the far end of the room. Like the main shrine room, the Gesar Temple had many windows that brought in huge amounts of light. The front of the room had a small additional shrine set up for a *Vajrakilaya puja*, an intensive practice being done by some of the lamas at the monastery. The format of a Rinchen Terdzö requires that certain practices be done in the background during the ceremonies. Vajrakilaya is the best practice for dispelling obstacles.

Gesar, the warrior-king of the ancient Buddhist kingdom of Ling, is both a historical and semi-mythic figure in Tibet. As a member of the Mukpo clan, he is an ancestor of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. The central figure in the Gesar Temple is a form of Gesar known as Dorje Tsegyal. This manifestation comes from a famous Gesar practice text composed by Jamgön Mipham. Dorje Tsegyal is surrounded by other manifestations of Gesar and his retinue drawn from the Dorje Tsegyal practice and from His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche's Gesar terma cycle. They include the drala form of Gesar, the wrathful form of Gesar known as Gesar Trakpo, and key figures from Gesar's life story such as his brother Gyaltsa Shelkar, Gesar's nephew Drala, who assumed the rulership of Ling after Gesar, and the minister-general Denma. These last three are, respectively, previous births of His Eminence, the Vidyadhara, and Jamgön Mipham (of whom Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche is an emanation).

On the very highest level of the monastery, built above the Gesar Temple, was another





Gyaltsa Shelkar

unfinished shrine room. It was quite small and had only enough room for six or eight people to practice together. The centerpiece was a beautiful, golden statue of Shakyamuni Buddha. Above his head was the primordial buddha, Samantabhadra with consort. To Shakyamuni's right was Vajrasattva with consort, and to the left was Amitayus, the buddha of long-life. Bhutanese artisans crafted these statues along with the many beautiful rupas on the lower levels of the new monastery.



Drala Tsegyal

On the way out of the building, Kristine McCutcheon, Patricia, and I stopped to visit Lama Tenzin in the head chöppön's office adjacent to the veranda outside the main shrine hall. The room was a long chamber probably designated for another purpose in the long run, but during the Rinchen Terdzö it was brimming with Tibetan texts, carefully wrapped packages of *tsakali* or small cards with paintings of visualizations (about 5,347 are needed to perform the empowerments), and all sorts of implements, offerings, medicines, and so on. Lama Tenzin had spent three months getting ready for the event. He prepared more than enough of the various herbal medicines needed for the empowerments and was sharing them with the Rinchen Terdzö that happened concurrently at Mindrolling Monastery in North India. Coincidentally, we used Mindrolling tormas manual because it was the most complete.

Lama Tenzin showed us the two volumes of handwritten notes he had written to keep track of what was going on moment by moment. The second volume of the Rinchen Terdzö had a long section devoted to shrine set up, but this was written in a kind of shorthand, so Lama Tenzin had checked every text in the collection and made a condensed list. I saw that the *tsakali* were photographs and enquired if they were the collection painted under the direction of Dodrubchen Rinpoche. Lama Tenzin told us that although Dodrubchen Rinpoche's set had the best colors, we were using photographs of Dudjom Rinpoche's collection, which included woodblock prints of the *tsakali* made during Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye's lifetime.

Late in the day, Patricia and I went for a walk through Camp Four. Because we arrived at the monastery in the dark of night and had been so busy since then, we had almost no idea what the village



Gesar's minister, Denma

looked like past the street leading from the monastery to the Ripa Ladrang. The town, as I mentioned a few weeks ago, is poor by Western standards. There were very few cars, and the concrete of the buildings and porches was all laid by hand.

Many of the homes in the village were built beside stilted corn sheds. Corn is the main crop in the region. The sheds also served as shade for the cows and calves that provided milk for the villagers. Since this was India, the cows were not raised for meat. The cows were much smaller than the ones we see in the West. The largest were not much taller than a Great Dane or St. Bernard.

If you've walked around in India, you know that it can be messy anywhere and everywhere—messy and somehow beautiful. There were bits of trash lying by the roads and in the fields around the camp. The houses, roadside projects, and paths all had a half-finished look; piles of unfinished wood or stone lay here and there beside every residence. At the same time, the valley was remarkably pretty with its short, dry, green hills vaulting up in the valley around the Rigon Thupten Mindrolling. One could easily imagine how paradisiacal everything looked in the rainy season when the grass and ground hungrily soaked in every bit of moisture in preparation for the dry months to come.

At the edge of the village, past a school and sports field, was an enormous white stupa, 40 or 50 feet high, with a statue of Padmasambhava in the lotus leaf shaped *gau* window in front. A pair of striking, anatomically correct, bas-relief male and female snow lions supported each corner of the base of the stupa with their shoulders and jewel-bearing, front paws. Surrounding the central stupa were eight small white stupas. These eight followed a traditional motif that corresponded to the eight deeds of the Buddha's life: his birth, enlightenment, teaching the dharma, and so on. Some of the stupas had a Buddha in its *gau*, others a wrathful deity. At sunset we walked to the guesthouse amongst a loose confederation of about a hundred cows on their way back home to sleep in the village.

### Entering The Eight Logos

January 3rd

After resuming the empowerments with familiar sound of Lhunpo Rinpoche's reading transmission filling the valley early this morning, the Rinchen Terdzö slipped back into its familiar, intense, and now comforting rhythm. I found myself reassured by His Eminence's voice and energy during the abhishekas. I toyed with making the word 'addictive' a major feature of this blog entry, however 'right place at the right time,' seemed the better way to put it.

This afternoon we concluded the section of the Rinchen Terdzö that is devoted to practices

of the guru, the first of the three roots. We ended with several more empowerments for Guru Drakpo and Dorje Trolö. As you may remember, the mahayoga section is a presentation of many styles of liturgical visualization practices. There are four main divisions to the mahayoga section: guru, yidam, dakini, and protector. In the latter part of the afternoon, we entered the yidam section of the empowerments.



Photograph by Walker Blaine

The overall categorization of yidams according to the Nyingma system is a classification of deities known as the *ka gye* or Eight Logos. Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche coined the term 'Eight Logos.' In his book *The Lion's Roar: An Introduction To Tantra* he explained that the word Greek word 'Logos' (meaning 'word' or 'reason') is the closest thing in the English language to the meaning of the Tibetan word *ka*. He added that *ka* can also mean 'command' or 'language.' *Gye* is the number 8 in Tibetan. The yidam section starts with a series of empowerments for practices that combine all Eight Logos into a single mandala, and then moves on to presentations of the separate practices in each individual Logos.

The last abhisheka of the day was a preliminary empowerment for a practice called *The Hundred Families Of The Vajradhatu; The Peaceful Deities Of The Union Of The Sugatas From The Eight Logos*. This terma was discovered by Nyangral Nyima Öser. He was born in 1136, and besides being the body emanation of Padmasambhava, he is known as the first of the Five Kingly Tertöns. The Kingly Tertöns were all rebirths of King Trisong Detsen, the ruler who established Buddhism in Tibet with the assistance of Padmasambhava. This connection is of great significance because of the close relationship between King Trisong Detsen and Padmasambhava. The other Kingly Tertöns are Guru Chökyi Wangchuk, Dorje Lingpa, Pema Lingpa, and Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo who was a guru to Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye.

From his childhood onwards, Nyangral (pronounced nyang-ral) Nyima Öser had many visions. During a month of visions when he was eight years old, he experienced receiving an abhisheka from Guru Rinpoche who was seated on a horse being carried by four dakinis. The encounter fostered such a strong change in Nyangral Nyima Öser's conduct that afterwards those who knew him thought he had gone insane. Such changes are not unusual for tertöns, but are difficult for ordinary people to comprehend. There is a famous story of Chogyur Lingpa getting out of step during a large dance performance at his monastery when he was

young. He was severely reprimanded because it appeared he was not paying attention to what was happening. However, during the lama dances Chogyur Lingpa had a pure vision of lama dances with Guru Rinpoche and had followed the group dancing with Guru Rinpoche instead of the dance troupe dancing at his monastery.

Later in his youth, Nyangral Nyima Öser's father gave him the empowerment of Hayagriva, the wrathful aspect of Avalokiteshvara, the second Logos. This practice is associated with the horse, and the main principle of the practice is called the three neighs of the horse. These three neighs destroy the body, speech, and mind of the demon Rudra, the personification of our deepest ego-clinging. When Nyangral Nyima Öser practiced Hayagriva during a cave retreat the *kila*, the ritual dagger on his shrine, actually neighed; Nyangral Nyima Öser had a vision of Hayagriva and left his hand and foot prints in solid rock.

Nyangral Nyima Öser was once given a statue by a merchant. The statue had broken finger, and inside the finger he found a terma inventory, a prophetic guide to termas that he could find should the right conditions prevail. This led him to discover two caskets of termas behind an image of the great translator Vairochana in a temple in Southern Tibet. This afternoon's preliminary empowerment was for one of the termas contained in the casket. The original terma Nyangral Nyima Öser discovered was a hand-written text first created for King Trisong Detsen's personal use. The scribes for the text were Vairochana the Translator, who was a highly realized principal disciple of Padmasambhava, and Denma Tsemang, who was also a translator as well as secretary to Padmasambhava and King Trisong Detsen. Denma Tsemang copied down many of the physical termas that were later discovered by the tertöns. Denma Tsemang is also credited for helping create Tibetan calligraphy.

During his life Nyangral Nyima Öser demonstrated a variety of miraculous abilities and lived until he was 69. At the time of his passing there were many wondrous signs. In particular, a white HRIH syllable emerged from his heart and went off in the direction of Sukhavati, the pure land of Buddha Amitabha where many practitioners aspire to take rebirth because conditions there are perfect for swiftly attaining enlightenment. At the cremation, his student Chak Lotsawa was unable to light the fire, but then the fire spontaneously lit itself. Everyone saw a small boy in the flames, surrounded by dakinis all chanting the mantra HA RI NI SA. Many extraordinary relics were found in the ashes.

About forty termas discovered by Nyangral Nyima Öser are included in the Rinchen Terdzö. The very first terma in the entire collection, the 240-page life story of Guru Rinpoche called the *Kathang Zanglingma*, translated in the West as *The Lotus Born, The Life Story Of Padmasambhava* is his, along with various practices for the peaceful and wrathful aspects of the guru, Avalokiteshvara, Vajravarahi, and Four-Armed Mahakala.

A simplified overview of the Eight Logos is written below. The names in the parentheses are alternate names for the practices. The first five Logos are transcendent practices whose chief aim is realization. The transcendent Logos are the deities of the five buddha families, which correspond to the enlightened aspects of body, speech, mind, quality, and activity. The last two of the Logos are worldly, not transcendent, and the sixth Logos can be either worldly or transcendent. Tai Situ Rinpoche explained that it isn't that the deities of the last two Logos are only worldly; it is just that their concentration is on the enrichment of life and removal of obstacles. Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's book *The Lion's Roar: An Introduction to Tantra* gives an excellent overview of the Eight Logos from an experiential perspective.

**The Five Transcendent Logos:**

1. Enlightened Body / Form

Peaceful: Manjushri

Wrathful: Yamantaka

2. Enlightened Speech:

Peaceful: Amitayus, Amitabha, Avalokiteshvara (Mahakarunikaya)

Wrathful: Red and Black Hayagriva

3. Enlightened Mind:

Peaceful: Vajrasattva

Wrathful: Vajra Heruka (Yangdak). Related practice: Vajrapani

4. Enlightened Quality:

Amritaguna (Dütsi Yönten, Chemchok)

5. Enlightened Activity

Vajrakilaya

**The Transcendent-Worldly Logos:**

6. Mamo Böton

Main practice: Mamo

Related practice: Simhamukha

**The Two Worldly Logos:**

7. Worldly Offerings and Praises

Main Practice: Jigten Chötö

8. Wrathful Mantras

Main Practice Möpa Dra-Ngak



## Eye On The Shrine

January 4th



The empowerment shrine after practice  
Photograph by Walker Blaine

The shrine room was a lonelier place with 30 Western guests gone after the Dzogchen Retreat. About the same number of Westerners remained, but more were scheduled to depart in the coming weeks. On the bright side, there was a bit more space for everyone and it was easier to get a seat close to the front of the room. Today I sat in the front row of Westerners for the first time, about eight feet from the huge empowerment shrine.

The shrine used for the empowerments was set up on the floor, a few feet off to the left of the central stage and His Eminence's throne. The empowerment shrine faced toward the center of the room, to the right, as you looked at it. It was oriented towards His Eminence as he gave the empowerments. Often one sees shrines facing out toward a shrine room, but this was not the case at the Rinchen Terdzö because the main person

relating to a shrine during an empowerment is the guru. It was nice to be able to get a close look at the implements and offerings as they were used during the ceremonies and brought around the room.

The empowerment shrine was about six feet square. The shrine itself was raised three and a half feet above the ground. It had a slightly lower level at its perimeter for the outer offerings. Outer offerings are things in the perceivable world of the five senses as opposed to an inwardly experienced offering like joy. In front of the shrine, facing His Eminence was another table covered with offerings and implements, many of which were used for the short daily feast practice that came at the conclusion of the empowerments. Underneath that table were offerings substances that were used as needed. For example, at the end of each day the chöpons made a number of tea offerings in long stemmed metal cups called *serkyem*. So many tea offerings were made each day that the chöpons refilled the tea from a bucket below this table. Another item under the table was a metal bowl filled with smoldering coals. The coals were occasionally used to ignite *gugulu*, a pine resin that smells like frankincense, which was used during the ceremonies.

In the middle of the outer offerings on the lower ledge on each side of the empowerment shrine was a central group of five offerings that, at least today, appeared to be similar to the five sense offerings on a Shambhala shrine, right down to the mirror for sight and the fabric tied in a bow on a short stick as the offering of touch. The shrine format changed each day according to practices being presented, so there was nothing definitive to say here. On either side of the five outer offerings, at the corners of the outer offerings ledges, was an ever-changing group of tormas and butter lamps. These seemed to shift each day, and were probably related to the specific empowerments given each day too. Members of the lay sangha often added personal butter lamp offerings to the shrine in the morning or early afternoon.

Above the shrine was an elaborate stilted canopy decorated in the same ornamental motif that adorns the palaces of the deities. This, like the empowerments and their instructions, was another way to point out the richness of the mind. The elaborate symbolism was sometimes overwhelming. Lama Tenzin, the head chöpon, burst into laughter the other day when he explained the next day's abhisheka set-up would involve eighteen ritual vases, every single one at the monastery. When the full tradition comes to the West there will be a lot to learn.

Eight of the nine empowerments today were from termas discovered by Nyangral Nyima Öser. Of those, three were abhishekas for protector practices connected to the combined Eight Logos cycles that he revealed. Sometimes the lay sangha left the shrine room during empowerments for protector practices. The Western students left the room during this time too, but that changed when we learned the requirement was to remain was completion of *ngöndro* practice and maintaining a relationship with the protectors either through doing a monthly feast with a full protector practice or through doing daily protector chants. The requirements to receive empowerments for the protector practices were necessary because of the potential of obstacles for people who did not maintain a good relationship with the protectors. Fully entering into a protector practice usually requires permission of a teacher and completion of the mantra recitations for at least one yidam.

Ngöndro means preliminary or 'that which goes before,' and refers to the preparatory practices that one does before starting a yidam practice like one of the Eight Logos. Ngöndro practice traditionally requires 100,000 or more recitations of a mantra or a short stanza as part of a series of meditations to help a student establish a firm connection to the dharma, and especially to the vajrayana path. Even with long sessions of daily practice, ngöndro can take several months or even years to complete. In the West, several contemporary teachers have changed the length of ngöndro to a requirement by time or to 10,000 of each of the preparatory practices.

It was a treat to be in the shrine room for the protector empowerments during the Rinchen

Terdzö. The doors to the veranda were closed. The room was markedly more attentive and almost completely silent during those abhishekas.

### Pema Lingpa, New Colors In The Shrine Room

January 5th

The shrine room became even more colorful yesterday. Until now I'd been wondering if they'd ever add hanging banners, *chöpen*, to the decor. These are common in Tibetan shrine rooms and had been absent in Orissa. However, as of yesterday, each of massive shrine room columns had a ceiling-to-floor *chöpen* hanging against it, facing towards the shrine room door. These were made from four rows of four-inch wide chevrons pointing downward in a pattern of alternating colors, blue, white, yellow, red, and green, which are the colors of the five buddha families. Each chevron had a matching tassel sewn to its point. At the back end of the room, hanging from the ceiling halfway to the floor on either side of the space on either side of the massive double doors, was a pair of five-foot diameter, circular canopies. These were designed in the same motif as the chevrons.

It was all about color, which was sort of funny because the shrine room was filled with monastics that have worn the same outfit every day since the 8th century. Tibet chose red for its robes because it was a warmer color than the other possibilities presented in the monastic code that came from India. After the destruction of the monastic tradition by King Langdarma in the 9th century, full ordination was brought back to Tibet through a Chinese monastic tradition, which wears blue. Some monastics have a blue ribbing on the right shoulder of their formal shirts to represent the generosity of the Chinese monastic lineage.

Today's abhishekas continued with empowerments for yidam sadhanas that combined the Eight Logos. Kristine McCutcheon said that the yidam empowerments might be more complicated than the ones in the guru section. For example, the guru tormas are all sculpted on a set format, but the tormas for the yidams are all different. I was skeptical when she told me about the increased complexity because a few of the empowerments in the guru section were very long. But I had to agree with her today when one empowerment lasted more than an hour; long enough to have most of us start asking each other, 'Where are we?'

An empowerment lasting more than an hour was 'long' because His Eminence read at a fast pace without giving much commentary and he only gave the empowerment to five people before he moved ahead in the text. Even though the members of the Ripa family on the stage, the lamas and khenpos in the front rows, and the representatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama sitting along the wall near the lamas, all received the abhisheka items brought to them by the Sakyong, and the other recipient rinpoches, His Eminence never stopped for that. He immediately started the next section of empowerments. (As you'll recall, the rest of the



assembly received the empowerment articles en masse at the end of the day.) Given all that, an abhisheka lasting more than an hour in this environment was a real attention-grabber, especially after a month of settling into things. As a point of contrast, the longest, most complex English abhisheka text I know takes less than 15 minutes to read through at a fast clip.



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

The last abhisheka of the day, *The Extremely Secret Mirror Of The Mind*, came from a terma revealed by Pema Lingpa. Pema Lingpa was born in Bhutan in 1450 and was the fourth of the Five Kingly Tertöns. He found many termas in Bhutan and showed how Padmasambhava had blessed that region of the Himalayas along with Tibet. He had an extraordinary childhood and liked to gather children to build stupas and to teach them the dharma. Sometimes he left impressions of his hands and feet in solid rock. He would listen to no one (a trait common to some young reincarnate lamas, notes Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche in his autobiography) and earned the nickname, 'Lord Of What He Wants.' He recognized the alphabet without any training.

When Pema Lingpa was 26 he had a vision of Padmasambhava who put an inventory of 108 termas into his hand. When Pema Lingpa was 27 he revealed his first terma. This happened at Lake Mebar and was witnessed by several people. He recovered the terma by submerging himself in the lake with a lit candle in his hand and returned later with the candle still lit and with a treasure casket under his arm. From this treasure casket he revealed the first of his termas, *Cycles Of The Great Expanse Of Great Perfection*.

The story of how Pema Lingpa's first terma was initially presented is instructive because it shows how extraordinary tertöns really are. A prophecy that went with the terma stated that the terma had to be explained in detail, but Pema Lingpa didn't know what to do because he'd never heard the melodies or seen the dances that went with the text, nor did he know how to explain the terma. One night while worrying about this he dreamed of Padmasambhava's consort, Yeshe Tsogyal, who told him not to worry. In the dream she showed him the dances of the dakinis that went with the text. He practiced these and showed them to his disciples. Every night during the twenty-one days of the initiations, Padmasambhava and Yeshe Tsogyal came to him in his dreams, explained how perform the next part of the initiations, and gave

him the next part of the explanation of the terma.

The list of the written termas revealed by Pema Lingpa is voluminous. He also found jewels and other items from the royal court at the time of King Trisong Detsen. Jewels, statues, and so forth are important terma discoveries because they revive peoples' dignity. Padmasambhava hid precious artifacts and even articles from ordinary households because he saw that people would lose the knowledge and ability to produce things on the artistic level that was common in his era. Pema Lingpa even revealed a terma temple that had been obscured from view and which can still be visited in Bhutan.

Near the time of his passing in 1521, Pema Lingpa had revealed found about half of the termas on his list of 108. His son Dawa asked to try to find them, and Pema Lingpa replied that if Dawa kept his spiritual commitments and prayed to him one-pointedly he might find some of the hidden teachings. This all came to pass and points to the power of blessings and devotion being able to carry the teachings forward in an amazing way. The terma lineages and instructions from Pema Lingpa continue strongly into our era through teachers like Gyetrul Jigme Rinpoche who is a rebirth of a manifestation of the qualities emanation of Pema Lingpa, Gyeling Yönten Lhundrub Gyatso Rinpoche.

### New Year's Letter From Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche

The following letter was written by Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche and sent to the members of the Shambhala Community during the Rinchen Terdzö.

New Year's Day is much like any other day. We rise early to the sound of the gyalings (Tibetan horns) as a light mist rolls off the hills of Orissa surrounding the monastery while the various monastics and lay community gather to receive the next series of empowerments of the Rinchen Terdzö. The pujas start early in the morning. This I know quite intimately, since my room is above the main shrine room and I can hear the monks playing their instruments from three in the morning until late at night.

Today we will receive empowerments of the eight aspects of Padmasambhava. I am amazed by how precisely and carefully His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche has been conducting the ceremony. We are all struck by his strength and stamina, especially for someone who is seventy years old. The other day he went for six hours straight, performing this complicated ritual until seven o'clock at night. Everyone was quite tired, but he seemed to pick up more energy and his voice was booming. It was quite something to think about. He had been going more or less all day, which he has been doing every day for weeks. At one point I asked him how he was doing, and he

immediately recounted when he had been with the Vidyadhara in Tibet as if it were yesterday. It struck me that this ceremony was profoundly important to him. He mentioned to me several times how he has held this transmission for many years and it is now going back to its rightful owner. I feel very moved to be here and very grateful to His Eminence and to the Ripa family for providing such a hospitable environment.

The monastery itself is beautiful—the only one I can recall that has consistent running water. Orissa is surprisingly pleasant at this time of the year and the entire Tibetan settlement is completely and wholeheartedly committed to His Eminence and the Ripa family. They feel overwhelmed and blessed that the Rinchen Terdzö is happening here. Likewise, since we arrived, the Sakyong Wangmo has been completely in her element, very cheerful while introducing me to a myriad of friends and prominent individuals in the surrounding Tibetan community.

As time goes along, more of the local sangha returns from their annual sweater-selling business abroad, gathering for the culmination of the Rinchen Terdzö and the celebration of the New Year. In this way, the winter months here are much like the summers in the West: a time for holidays and family reunions. The Rinchen Terdzö is clearly an important and timely undertaking for the community here as well as for our own Shambhala lineage, especially during this time of instability in the world. By receiving these transmissions, we safeguard the precious wisdom that they contain.

In many ways, the Rinchen Terdzö is like a marathon of abhishekas. I believe we are past the warm-up phase and are now hitting our stride. As in any long ordeal, it is better not to think about the end, but to remain present. As we go through volume upon volume of rich wisdom held within Tibetan Buddhism, it is inspiring to touch its depth and vastness. Day after day, as we hear the quintessential instructions and collected wisdom of yogis, scholars, and rulers, both lay and monastic practitioners, the insights and realizations pouring forth live up to the name “Treasure Trove of Precious Jewels” (Rinchen Terdzö).

I am proud and delighted that many Shambhalians are sponsoring this unique transmission, and I welcome people to make offerings as they did at last year’s Gesar pujas. Along with your offering, it is customary to make an aspirational prayer with the name of the person or project that the prayer is being done for, as well as your own name, which is then read aloud at various breaks throughout the day. This Buddhist custom karmically binds the patrons to the ceremonies, gaining the patrons merit. The monastic sangha performs the rites and dedicates them to the lineage, to

## THE GREAT RIVER OF BLESSINGS

those who are either sick or encountering difficulty, to the assembly, to the patrons, and to all sentient beings. Additionally, I encourage people who wish to participate at home to connect to the events here by engaging in Padmasambhava-related practices.

That's it for now; my break is coming to an end. I send you my love and blessings. You are all in my heart.

The Sakyong, Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche

Orissa

1 January 2009

### Phase One Of The Eight Logos Ending, Feast Food Round Up

January 6th



Manjushri  
Photograph by Walker Blaine

Today we nearly finished the empowerments for sadhanas that condense all Eight Logos into a single practice, the first part of the section of the Rinchen Terdzö devoted to the root of attainment, the yidam practices. The next part of the yidam section presented the practices of each of the Logos individually. Generally speaking, each Logos section starts with the peaceful aspect and then moves to the empowerments for the wrathful aspect. For example, in the case of the first Logos, the peaceful aspect is Manjushri, and the wrathful aspect is Yamantaka. The term 'Eight Logos' usually refers to the wrathful practices, although the peaceful aspect is implicit in the wrathful.

The last abhisheka of the day was a preliminary empowerment for a combined Eight Logos terma discovered by Chogyur Lingpa. A preliminary empowerment involves a few things usually found in an abhisheka without a preliminary empowerment and a few things usually not included. The similarities are things like the initial purification by vase water; the teacher dispelling obstacles, ritually setting the boundaries for the abhisheka, and reading its history; and the students offering a mandala, requesting the empowerment, and retaking their vows of refuge, bodhicitta, and samaya. The unusual aspects of a preliminary empowerment include being given some kusha grass to go under one's pillow and mattress for clear dreams, and a blessed cord to be tied on the arm for protection.

The Buddha sat on a kusha grass mat when he attained enlightenment. In the Indian tradition, kusha is generally seen as auspicious and as having the ability to clean away obstructions. It's commonly used to make brooms. The cord for the arm, someone once told me perhaps in jest, is to make sure one comes back the next day. Some days, in the interest of time, we received a preliminary empowerment immediately preceding the main empowerment. On the days when the preliminary and main empowerments would have been the last of the evening, His Eminence bestowed only the preliminary empowerment. By the time the Rinchen Terdzö concluded, everybody had a big pile of kusha stuffed under his or her mattress.

We received another closed abhisheka today too. It was the second time people who had finished ngöndro were able to stay on. I was happy to see about half of the Westerners were able to remain for the empowerment. The young monks, all of whom could stay because of being monastics, curiously noted who stayed on and who had to leave.

Today's empowerments included a variety of additional chants. This pattern started a couple of weeks ago when His Eminence began to signal the chant leader to start a particular memorized text as part of an abhisheka. The memorized text came in addition to the lines of refuge, bodhisattva vows, and so forth that the assembly repeated after His Eminence according to the empowerment being bestowed. The memorized section was usually a seven-fold service, seven kinds of practices that generate merit or good karmic momentum in the mindstream of someone doing them wholeheartedly. A short seven-fold service, the one used when I heard the monastics break into the memorized one, is:

By prostrating, offering, confessing,  
Rejoicing, requesting to teach, and asking to remain,  
Whatever trifle of virtue we have accumulated  
We dedicate for the sake of enlightenment.

*Translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee*

This famous condensed seven-fold service is found in many places, including *The King Of Aspiration Prayers*, the long mahayana aspiration that we sing three or four times a week at the end of the day. It is a very popular liturgy and is read, among other times, when someone has passed away as a method to generate merit and positive intention. Today we also used a vajrayana confession liturgy well known in Shambhala, the "*Confession Liturgy That Brings Reconciliation With The Jnanadevas*," and I realized we've been closing each day with a famous terma known in Shambhala as the *Chogyur Lingpa Aspiration*.

Since it was the auspicious 10th day of the lunar calendar, the Shambhala and Padma Ling



Photograph by Walker Blaine

sanghas gathered in the old monastery after dinner to perform a feast practice together. We decided we would do our different liturgies simultaneously. The Ripa sangha sat on one side of the room and sang the feast practice for one of His Eminence's Padmasambhava termas in Tibetan while the Shambhala sangha sat on the other side of the room and chanted and sang Jamgön Mipham's Padmasambhava feast liturgy in English. Somehow we managed to meet at both the

mantra recitations and feast sections of the liturgies.

The chöpöns at the monastery were kind enough let us use a Padmasambhava shrine toorma from the abhishekas, and they made us a feast toorma too. The feast toormas in Orissa tasted about the same as they did in the West, although the roasted barley flour was more roughly milled and flavorful than back home. We later learned that some of the toormas were made with roasted cornmeal. Besides the two simultaneous practices in the shrine room, the sound of three other evening practice sessions elsewhere in the monastery drifted in and out the windows. And even though there was no meat at the feast, we were able to have some local arak. Other treats included commercial Indian orange soda, deep fried party mix that tasted slightly like peppered sulphur, Cadbury chocolate (a standard in Asia), and roasted chickpeas the size of lentils.

## Breakfast With Their Majesties

January 7th

This morning the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo hosted a breakfast for the Shambhala sangha in a receiving room on the third floor of the monastery. This is the area of the monastery where the rinpoches lived during the empowerments. The walls of the receiving room were painted a cheerful shade of light yellow. It had beautiful white marble floors and big windows to the blue skies outside, and even though the chamber had yet to get carpets and artwork, it was a spacious and relaxing place to eat a meal. Their Majesties sat side-by-side on comfortable Western armchairs, and the rest of us, about fifteen in all, sat on low Tibetan sofas and thick blue practice mats arranged in a circle around the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo.

The menu was spinach timbale, chapattis, roti, and bananas with homemade yogurt. Kaling had made a tasty roasted vegetable and chili sauce. Most of the breakfast was prepared



in the dignitary kitchen by Marvin Robinson, chief cook for the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo. Marvin was a slightly mysterious presence at the Rinchen Terdzö. Because he cooked all day, he was only able to dart into the shrine room during his breaks. His odd schedule endeared him to several Tibetan lay people practicing on the veranda, with whom Marvin sat when he had the chance. At breakfast, the Sakyong joked that Marvin was doing the path backwards, starting with the last parts of each abhisheka. Marvin added that when things were over, he would go to Shambhala Training Level One.

During breakfast, the Sakyong said he was happy to arrive at the Manjushri abhishekas today, and he remarked how special it was to receive all Eight Logos in succession. (He has received many of the empowerments in the collection before.) The Sakyong went on to tell us details about other Rinchen Terdzös. On one occasion, when His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche gave the empowerments in Bhutan, His Holiness never left his seat in the shrine room. He slept sitting on his throne, and a jar or basin was brought to him when he wanted to go to the bathroom. Everyone else left the shrine room at the end of each day; the discipline was too much for them. During the empowerments, His Holiness was always doing something. During the breaks between the abhishekas, he composed texts and practiced at every opportunity throughout the three or four months of the event.

Dodrubchen Rinpoche gave the reading transmission at that Rinchen Terdzö. Dodrubchen Rinpoche is known for his incredibly fast reading speed. He once bestowed the Rinchen Terdzö by giving both the abhishekas and the lungs. The Sakyong received the Rigdzin Düpa empowerment from Dodrubchen Rinpoche a few years ago and said that he'd never heard someone read so fast with such perfect diction. Every single syllable was precisely audible.

At one point during the meal, we discussed our good weather and how it might become uncomfortably hot in March. This reminded the Sakyong Wangmo of when she received the abhishekas from her father ten years ago at Rigon Tashi Choeling Monastery in Tibet. At that time, the abhishekas took three months, which included a few days for breaks during the event. The Rinchen Terdzö started in October and went into December. It was so cold that people were wrapped in blankets in the shrine room.

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche asked how many empowerments there were to go. Patricia Kirigin explained that we had received 250 of roughly 740 abhishekas, and added that counting was tricky because the empowerment lists had different numbering systems. She said that His Holiness Penor Rinpoche's abhisheka list was abbreviated, and that while His Eminence Tai Situ Rinpoche's list had more items on it, some of the entries, like those for oral instructions, could not be included in the final total.

During this discussion, we learned more about the failed attempts to get His Eminence to abbreviate the empowerments. His Eminence insisted on the importance of the Sakyong receiving the elaborate abhishekas as well as getting all the details right, for example making sure implements were pointed in the right direction when he received them from the chöpon or when he offered the implements to the Sakyong.

At one point, conversation diverted uses of the room we were sitting in. The day before, the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo had used the room to receive the Dalai Lama's representatives attending the Rinchen Terdzö, the heads of the five Tibetan camps here in Orissa, and the road crew. The meeting with the road crew had particular significance for the community because a major road-building project was to start in twenty days.

The roads in the area mystified me until this morning. We traveled on dirt roads for the last 15 kilometers of hills and Indian villages on the way to the monastery. Pretty much out of nowhere, we suddenly hit a paved road through the part of Camp Four leading up to monastery gate. This became dirt again at the new monastery grounds. The road made a T-shape in middle of Camp Four, and was only half a kilometer of pavement altogether, if that.

It turned out that this road was built many years ago by the Indian government. The function of the road was for drainage during the rainy season, not for driving. Without a road like this in the middle of a village during the rainy season, any street becomes unwalkable mud. Mud is a breeding ground for malarial mosquitoes. Every year during the rainy season, the entire region is a malarial hot-zone. Roads with drainage immediately reduce malarial infections; it was a kindness that the Indian government built a road beside the compound of the leader of the community, Namkha Drimed Rinpoche.

As many readers will remember, during the wedding ceremony for the Sakyong and the Sakyong Wangmo in Orissa in 2008, a large amount of money was pledged to build an addition to the local medical clinic. The Sakyong Foundation was to sponsor the new building as the first humanitarian effort by Shambhala. After the wedding there was extensive discussion within the local community about how to best use the money so that the clinic was not just a band-aid, so to speak. The community elders decided it was better to use the money for roads in the camps and uproot a main condition for the spread of malaria. Curiously, during the discussions about this, the value of the dollar against the rupee rose more than 15% and so added substantially more support to the project than was originally expected.

As an aside, I'd like to mention that a friend had a fever the other day. We were concerned about it being a malarial onset so we asked the clinic for help. A nurse came and immediately administered a malaria test that fortunately came out negative. It took about 15 minutes to



find out if malarial parasites were present in the blood. This time of year, it is rare to get malaria, but everyone wanted to make sure. While we waited for the test results, we asked about malaria in the region. Education, preventive methods like fly screens and clinical treatment have dramatically reduced the impact of the disease in the camps and surrounding Indian villages. There's been only one death in several years, an elderly Tibetan who neglected to seek medical attention.



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

Therefore, there is a lot of excitement about the new roads. Camp Two, the smallest, won a lottery and will get the first set of streets, then Camp Five, the largest. The final camp of the five to get roads will be the monastery, Camp Four. The Sakyong Wangmo noted that since they already had some roads, they were better off than the other camps. May all go well and quickly for this new project.

Breakfast ended with the sound of the monastery's calling gong for the next session of the reading transmissions. The Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo departed, each saying we'd do it again. It was a good start to a day that included seven peaceful Manjushri abhishekas (white, red, yellow, and orange Manjushris among them) and the appearance of a pigeon in the shrine room, who spent hours shifting from perch to perch before finding its way back to the world outside.

## Entering The Wrathful Mandala

January 8th

Today we concluded the Manjushri empowerments. Manjushri is the peaceful manifestation of the first of the Eight Logos, the enlightened aspect of body. In his two-armed manifestation, Manjushri is usually seen holding a sword in his right hand and a text in his left. Sometimes these are floating above him, each on a lotus while he holds the stems of the flowers with his fingertips and displays the gesture of teaching with his hands. Jamgön Mipham, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche's predecessor, is sometimes depicted in this same way to show that he was an emanation of Manjushri.

Two of the Manjushri abhishekas today were a little unusual. One was for a Manjushri in union with his consort Sarasvati on top of a snow lion. Consorts of the deities are seen as inseparable from their counterparts. They are inseparable in the same way that an eye

## THE GREAT RIVER OF BLESSINGS

consciousness, the experience of seeing, is inseparable from the object that it sees. Female deities are often symbolic of the wisdom or empty aspect of mind; male deities are often symbolic of the compassionate, skillful aspect of mind. The second peaceful abhisheka was for Sarasvati alone, as a single deity.

Sarasvati is sometimes taught as a deity related to the arts, and sometimes as a deity related to learning while Manjushri is generally connected to intelligence. She is also a figure in the Hindu pantheon. The Tibetan for Sarasvati is Yangchen, which can mean ‘Melodious One.’ She is often depicted playing a lute. The Hindus show her riding on or sitting beside a swan.

After the conclusion of the Manjushri empowerments, His Eminence began the abhishekas for the wrathful aspect of the first Logos, the heruka Yamantaka. While there are at least two images of peaceful Manjushri in the shrine room, I was unable to find any depictions of Yamantaka. This was probably because the Taksham lineage, one of the main lineages held by His Eminence (and the basis for the motif of the frescos) places the most emphasis on Hayagriva, the second of the eight herukas. Frescos of Hayagriva are everywhere.

Yamantaka in Tibetan is *Shinjeshay*. This is sometimes shortened to *Shinje*, meaning ‘Slayer of the Lord of Death.’ Yamantaka is a very wrathful figure with a bull’s head, a human body and many arms carrying implements and weapons that symbolize qualities like cutting through ignorance and awakening others through the sound of the teachings. It is important to remember that the wrathful deities are embodiments of the transmutation of our own most destructive and negative habits and impulses. It’s our own ignorance that we cut. When we do that, our actions become naturally skillful and multifaceted. A key point in the tantric teachings is that every part of our lives is workable and can become an aspect of awakening. We are in no way justified in being aggressive, but anger has a pure aspect. That is what we train to recognize.

In his book, *The Lion’s Roar: An Introduction to Tantra*, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche explains that Yamantaka is connected with the southern part of the mandala and thus with the qualities of the *ratna* (jewel), the symbol of enrichment. A mandala can be a geographic presentation of mind’s qualities and potentials; the center and the various directions in a mandala are connected with different aspects of the mind. In the following quote, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche also connects enrichment with death, as the name of the deity implies.

...Usually we don’t at all regard death as an enrichment. We regard death as a loss, a complete and tremendous loss. But here death is regarded as enrichment—in the sense that the final cessation of existence could be regarded as the ultimate creativity.

And the ultimate creativity or collecting process is also deathly at the same time. So there are those two polarities here. But by no means is relating with death, or Yamantaka, regarded as something safe or something that will save you. Instead there is the interplay of those two polarities. *Page 197*

I always find Trungpa Rinpoche's writing amazing and a bit disconcerting. There's no place to hide when reading it, particularly when he addresses vajrayana topics. In the paragraph above, 'death', while referring to the big D death, is also pointing to something more subtle, an ongoing process of dying in our lives. Waking up is the death of sleep; going outside is the death of being indoors. Every moment in our experience is based on the death of the preceding moment, and out of that comes a tremendous amount energy and wealth—to the extent that we recognize the process. At the same time, with this recognition comes an ongoing death, the death of who we think we are. That is both unsettling and enriching.

## The Eight Herukas

## Interview With Gyetrul Jigme Rinpoche

The following interview with Jigme Rinpoche is about the Eight Logos, also known as the Eight Herukas. Jigme Rinpoche gave a short overview of the Eight Herukas and explained how the classification is used to categorize the yidam practices and how the first classification of the first five of the Eight Logos, the transcendent deities, can be applied to the practices of the guru.

Jigme Rinpoche: The main deities that you find in both kama and terma are the eight herukas. The eight herukas are the yidams of the Nyingma. They are the world of the yidam, the vehicle through which one attains the quickest *siddhi* [accomplishment] in this life. Each terma cycle is revealed on the basis of one of the eight herukas. Those eight are classified as body, speech, mind, quality, activity, mamu, worldly offerings and praises, and wrathful mantras. All of the empowerments of the Rinchen Terdzö are connected to the eight herukas. The eight herukas include all peaceful and wrathful, male and female, deities. All possible deities can be found among these eight herukas.

The Eight Logos are not just found in the world of the yidams, they are also in the world of the gurus. This is because the gurus are the nature of the five wisdoms—something that fits into the guru classification has an aspect of the five wisdoms. When you divide the eight herukas, five of them are the deities of the five wisdoms, one is a half-worldly/half-wisdom deity, and the last two are worldly deities. An abhisheka can either belong to the body part, the speech part, the mind part, the quality part, or action part from among the five wisdoms. A yidam can also be

classified into one of the five wisdoms. There isn't any deity that doesn't fit into one of the five wisdoms. And the five wisdoms are part of the eight herukas.

The first of the Eight Logos is Jampal (Manjushri), or body (Skt. *kaya*, Tib. *ku*), which is Manjushri in the peaceful aspect and Yamantaka in the wrathful aspect. The second is Pema, or speech (Tib. *sung*), the lotus family. The peaceful aspect of the speech family includes deities like Guru Rinpoche, Amitabha, and so forth. The wrathful aspect is Hayagriva, and so on. The third is Yangdak, mind or heart, and it also has peaceful and wrathful aspects. The fourth is Dütsi (Amrita), or quality. And finally there is Vajrakilaya, or activity.

So these are the categories that any peaceful or wrathful deity will belong to, from the point of view of the yidam's world. You will be see it here at the Rinchen Terdzö as it unfolds over time. There are vast numbers of deities, but you will find that they all belong to one of the eight herukas.

### Imagery And Faith

January 9th

Some readers who are new to Tibetan Buddhism might have been surprised by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's remarks about Yamantaka, and I thought it would be good to share some things the Sakyong said to me in a conversation about tantric imagery and symbolism today. The Sakyong pointed out that the language used by the Vidyadhara in the 1970's was somewhat psychological and needed to be read in context in order to avoid creating confusion. Taking the Vidyadhara's statements out of context could start to make things sound quite strange. The Sakyong added that the main things to know were that the Vidyadhara was completely aware of the language he was using and that the Eight Logos sadhanas were among Vidyadhara's main practices.

This afternoon we received all but five of the remaining empowerments for Yamantaka. It was a typical day, although there was the occasional interesting torma, and once the chöpon waved a censer without wearing the dignified yellow hat. Somehow this was a real eye-opener after many weeks of seeing the yellow hat in action. Most of the Westerners commented on this during dinner.

Yesterday, an unusually large group of Indian tourists came to visit the empowerments. At one point, there were about 50 people standing in the second floor gallery, intently watching the ceremonies for ten or fifteen minutes. Occasionally they snapped flash pictures. Toward the end of their visit, His Eminence looked up from his throne and surveyed the entire group, and then the chant leader signaled it was time for the afternoon break. Two of the

tourists turned out to be reporters from a local TV station who asked me for an interview, which I declined.

## Long-Life Practice

January 10th

Generally speaking, Padmasambhava hid the termas, although other realized beings like Vimalamitra concealed termas too. It is said that many mahayana teachings were also hidden in a manner like the termas. The teachings on emptiness called the Prajnaparamita sutras are a prime example of this. The Prajnaparamita sutras are said to have been taught by the Buddha, but then given to the *nagas*, non-human beings with great power of intellect, for safekeeping until they were recovered in the second century by the great teacher, Nagarjuna.

The Prajnaparamita sutras focus on the presentation of emptiness, one of the two main teachings in mahayana Buddhism. The main set of mahayana teachings focus on buddha nature. The teachings on emptiness were hidden because the context was not right for those teachings to be presented publically during the Buddha's life. The situation was the same with the terma teachings, hidden during Padmasambhava's time and discovered later, starting in the 11th century. All these teachings needed a specific context when they would be most needed and useful.

Today we received the last five Yamantaka empowerments. The first two were restricted to the monastics, and the first of those was restricted to the fully ordained monastics; the 'little monks', as it was put in the announcement, had to leave the shrine room along with the householders. A fully ordained monastic takes a more elaborate series vows than a novice, and must be over 18 years of age. The Sakyong and the other lay lineage holders were allowed receive the empowerments along with the fully ordained sangha. I was happy to see that the monastics included Jinpa, one of the fully ordained sangha at Gampo Abbey.



Amitayus

Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

After being on both sides of closed doors to teachings over the years, it has become clear it's worth the wait and the preparation to attend restricted events. I am not planning to take full ordination, so Yamantaka may be a long wait. Generally speaking, secrecy in the Buddhist context is about proper preparation. It's like waiting until someone has grown physically and emotionally capable of handling a moving car before teaching him or her how to drive.

The Yamantaka empowerments concluded the first of the Eight Logos, the Logos related to the enlightened aspect of body. The Indian teacher Manjushrimitra, a figure in the transmission of both the mahayoga and dzogchen teachings, gave the Yamantaka teachings to Padmasambhava. Padmasambhava received the Eight Logos from eight teachers, collectively known as The Eight Vidyadharas. He also received all eight in a combined form from the dakini Mahakarmendrani. From Nagarjuna (a different Nagarjuna than the one that recovered the Prajnaparamita teachings) Padmasambhava received the second of the Eight Logos, the practices related to enlightened speech, often called *Pema Sung*, Lotus Speech. We started to receive these empowerments today.

The speech family is the largest section of the Eight Logos and contains about 150 empowerments. Padmasambhava, the source of the termas, is from the lotus family too, so naturally there are a lot of empowerments in this category. Speech in general refers to any form of communication. Inwardly, speech refers to our energy and passion. We live in the human realm, and the predominant emotion in the human world is passion. This is contrasted, for example, to the animal realm, which generally possesses a limited capacity for higher learning and is driven by a style that is more fearful and ignorant than passionate. Compassion is sometimes described as enlightened passion. Interestingly, the word compassion comes from the Latin meaning 'to suffer with'.

The peaceful section of the Speech family contains practices for three different types of deities: Amitayus, Amitabha and Avalokiteshvara. Today we received the first five of about thirty empowerments related to Amitayus, *Tsepamay* in Tibetan. Amitayus means 'limitless life'. He is one of three deities associated with long-life or vitality in the Tibetan tradition. The other two are the goddesses White Tara, who is more connected to fertility, and Ushnishavijaya, who is mentioned as Jaya Devi in the *Invocation For Raising Windhorse* chant written by Jamgön Mipham. There are several Tara empowerments in the dakini section of the Rinchen Terdzö. The Ushnishavijaya empowerments were bestowed during the pacifying and enriching divisions of the auxiliary sadhanas section that came later in the Rinchen Terdzö.

Amitayus is red in color and is depicted holding a golden vase with his hands in his lap, seated with his legs crossed in vajra posture, feet on top of his knees rather than under them. Sometimes Amitayus is presented in union with consort; sometimes he is seated alone. The

vase contains *amrita* (Tib. *dutsi*), the medicinal liquor of long-life. Padmasambhava, who achieved the siddhi of long-life, also holds this kind of vase. Amitayus wears the colorful silken garments of ancestral Indian royalty, a jeweled golden crown, and beautiful jewelry.

All of the iconographical splendor is meant to lead us toward our own natural richness. This is where genuine vitality resides. The different deities in meditation are visualized as made of light, not like the solid figures of everyday life. Amitayus is often visualized over one's head with the amrita of longevity streaming from the vase into one's own body, which is also visualized as made of light. In the end of the meditation the deity dissolves into the practitioner who imagines she or he is of the same nature as Amitayus.

## The Sambhogakaya

January 11th

Today during first full day of long-life empowerments, some of us had an experience of time being slowed down. When I asked someone what time it was, I thought it was already time for tea, but it turned out we'd been in the shrine room barely more than an hour. After the abhishekas ended, a friend remarked that the afternoon had been like being on the beach in the warm sun; the environment was incredibly light, peaceful, and timeless. I was reciting the hundred-syllable Vajrasattva mantra during the empowerments and ended up doing four or four or five hundred more recitations than I expected. This was my subjective experience, but it was unusual.

Amitayus, the buddha of long-life, is not like Buddha Shakyamuni who actually lived as a person. Amitayus is a sambhogakaya buddha, a transcendent expression of enlightenment that is the embodiment of the joyful, radiant aspect of fully awakened mind. The sambhogakaya is one of the three kayas of a buddha. *Kaya* means body, and *sambhoga* means complete enjoyment. The other two bodies are the dharmakaya and the nirmanakaya. Dharmakaya refers to the aspect of mind that is beyond reference point—mind's empty essence. The nirmanakaya refers to a body that we can encounter with the five senses, in this life right now.

A nirmanakaya is a compassionate manifestation of the interplay of the first two kayas in the world. The mind beyond reference point, inseparable from its own dynamic play and radiance, can express itself in this world as an act of compassion for those who haven't realized their buddha nature. Shakyamuni Buddha and Padmasambhava are often called nirmanakaya buddhas. The Tibetan word *tülku*, in colloquial Buddhist English, is often used to describe reincarnate teachers like His Eminence, the Sakya, and Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche.

Meditating on a sambhogakaya buddha brings one's attention to the dynamic, energetic aspect of the mind of realization. Meditation on a dharmakaya or nirmanakaya buddha familiarizes the practitioner with other noble qualities of awakened mind. However, meditation on any one of the three kayas will include aspects of the other two. Such meditations support the practitioner in developing faith that the qualities of the three kayas are naturally part of one's own being. When that faith is stable, one can have a direct experience of the kayas and go beyond faith. Technically speaking, the only ones who directly perceive sambhogakaya buddhas are realized practitioners. These are practitioners who have a genuine, stable recognition of emptiness, one of the most subtle and interesting topics presented in the Buddhist teachings.

Meditation on a sambhogakaya buddha, even at early stages in the path, combined with study and reflection on the meaning of the teachings, will hasten one's understanding. This in turn can lead to further progress in meditation. If we have an image for what it is like to perceive the radiance of the ultimate nature of mind and we spend time working with that image, eventually we will see what the image is pointing to more clearly. This takes perseverance. If it were easy, we'd have world peace in a week. However, even a little meditation of this type is very beneficial.

The vajrayana teachings come with a caution. Leaping into practices like visualization without the help of a genuine teacher is like driving blindfolded, to continue yesterday's analogy. Guessing the answers to questions about the subtleties of mind can be psychologically dangerous and create unnecessary obstacles. Moving forward with guidance and feedback from people who have walked the path is the best way to approach the dharma, and especially the esoteric teachings.

The terma practices we received today came from variety of tertöns including Sangye Lingpa, Dorje Lingpa, Ratna Lingpa, and Pema Lingpa. These are four of the eight (or eleven) Lingpas, a group of extraordinary tertöns prophesized by Padmasambhava. Lingpa means 'sanctuary', and points to the fact that a tertön is a sanctuary of peace and happiness for beings.

Today we also received an abhisheka for a long life terma practice discovered by Thangtong Gyalpo (1361-1485). The practice we received was the short, famous, and frequently given *Bestowal Of The Splendor Of Immortality*. This long-life practice is revered in part because Thangtong Gyalpo lived to the age of 125. In my opinion, he was one of the coolest *mahasiddhas* or greatly accomplished ones in Tibet. He studied with teachers in all four schools, and furthered his understanding in Nepal and India for 18 years. He was a holder of the Northern Termas among many other lineages, and he travelled widely, visiting China,



Bhutan, Kashmir, Lhadak, and Mongolia.

Thangtong Gyalpo became a doctor later in his life and developed new medicines for a variety of diseases. Besides being a temple architect, grammarian, poet, and playwright, he is also known for building iron suspension bridges in Tibet, an amazing feat for someone in the 14th and 15th centuries. Some of Thangtong Gyalpo's bridges may have been in use during the early 20th century. Pieces of iron from these bridges are kept as objects of devotion in the Tibetan community. His specific teaching lineage is appropriately known in the Nyingma as The Iron Bridge.

## Chöpöns And Tormas

January 12th

As we settled into the second full day of long-life empowerments, the feeling at the monastery became even more mellow. This was the trend during most of the peaceful empowerment days. Even our dreams seemed to be part of the atmosphere. During breakfast Craig Mollins mentioned he dreamed of drinking wheatgrass, a classic peaceful brew. Everyone agreed wheatgrass was definitely symbolic of long-life in the West, although some debate ensued about the taste and true merits of the beverage.

The long-life vase Amitayus holds in his lap is not like a Western flower vase. It is more like a wide-bellied pot with no spout. It is similar to the vases used in empowerments, but those have long spouts. The long-life vase often appeared in the form of a torma to be used during the Amitayus empowerments. This form of a torma has appeared in every long-life empowerment and many of the empowerments for Padmasambhava practices during the guru section last month.



Photograph by Walker Blaine

Long-life tormas are usually shrine tormas, rather than tormas we might eat. Most torma forms are made with roasted barley flour, water, and sometimes a little butter. These are then painted different colors. I have heard of a Tibetan monastery in the West using couscous instead of barley flower for shrine tormas because couscous is easy to prepare and shape. After being used in practice, shrine tormas are offered outside at a place where people won't walk. One of the buildings at Surmang Dütsi Til Monastery houses a strict one-year retreat that requires the participants never leave the upper level of the building. The shrine tormas leave that retreat through a window on the second floor and a pack of wild dogs waits beneath the window for the arrival of treats throughout the day.

As you can see from the photo above, torma decorations are a colorful experience. The decorations on the long-life torma are flower petals, the sun, the moon, and jewels. Tormas can be decorated with everything imaginable; the most elaborate ones have detailed sculptures of different lineage teachers on them. There are torma competitions in Tibet from time to time, although I suspect such events have liturgical components that set them far apart from baking competitions in the West. Some tormas can be six or eight feet high.

All parts of a torma have symbolism, even the abstract shapes and proportions. Most of the time, the central torma on a shrine represents a deity. A torma can also be an offering to the deity, or a torma could be both the deity and the offering. In Tibet, the decorations on tormas are often made with butter, usually dri butter. (A dri is a female yak. Asking a Tibetan about yak butter can be embarrassing.) In Orissa, where butter was in short supply and melted easily, the monks used a formula of paraffin wax and non-hydrogenated vegetable oil that was shapeable, stable, and took dye well.

The torma making room at the monastery was a busy place. The chöpons at the Rinchen Terdzö worked nearly round the clock because the empowerment tormas had to be ready the night before the next day's empowerments were given. The finished tormas were placed on the shrine in preparation for His Eminence's arrival at 6:30 the next morning. From experience I know a single empowerment shrine can sometimes take an hour or more to set up from scratch. A lot was prepared ahead of time for the Rinchen Terdzö, but the monks were faced with setting up an estimated average of 8 empowerments a day, a huge responsibility.

The chöpons helping His Eminence bestow the empowerments were top notch. In the midst of all their activity, every single one of them displayed remarkable equanimity. For example, during the empowerments they had to personally engage with hundreds of people in succession. Doing that, the chöpons were exposed to 800 consecutive habits. If you've been to an empowerment, you know that people's ways of receiving icons, vases water, and so forth can reflect various states of mind and spacing out. A couple hundred of monks were boys, so it was a mixed bag of chaos and devotion every time the chöpons moved through the crowd. During the three months of abhishekas, I never saw any of the chöpons become frustrated, display aggression, or show any kind of jaded behavior that would indicate they experienced the empowerments with anything other than an open mind.

Lama Tenzin, the head chöpon, was in his late 30s or early 40s at the oldest. The assistant chöpons appeared to be in their early 20s. Lama Kunam, the text master who was very knowledgeable about many of the practices, was also in his mid 20s. Most of the chöpons were fully ordained, which was a sign of general maturity and commitment.

Around the start of the Speech Logos, I lost my cloth flower. Because flowers are often held in the hands when taking or retaking vows, everyone had been given a cloth flower to use in place of a real flower during all the rituals of the Rinchen Terdzö. The cloth flowers were made from three pieces of colored brocade, each cut to resemble a full spread of flower petals, and then sew together in a stack. Afterwards, a thick red string ‘stem’ was attached to bottom of the flower, making a kind of permanent offering. Somehow my flower had vanished from my pocket earlier in the week. Remembering that cloth flowers had been distributed to latecomers, two days ago I asked Lama Tenzin if he had more. He immediately replied he’d make me one, which startled me because I knew the incredibly long hours he was working. I said the flower wasn’t necessary, but at the end of the next day he presented me with a fresh brocade flower anyway.

## The Cycle Of Generosity

January 12th

Yesterday at teatime, two groups of Tibetan men made presentations of khatas and money first at the main shrines, then to His Eminence and the Sakyong, and then to all the assembled lamas and khenpos. A clear-voiced monk read the aspirations made by each group. This reading included the amount of money to be offered to each of the recipients. After the principal teachers received their offerings, everyone else was given a small monetary gift, starting with the monastics and finishing with the Tibetan and Western lay practitioners. After the offerings, the entire assembly performed several short liturgical practices for the wishes of the benefactors to be filled. The Tibetan donors throughout the ceremony looked humble and happy. One of them, a brawny and fierce-looking man with ruddy cheeks who wore a tight cowboy shirt, offered seven prostrations at the start of the ceremony rather than the usual three.

The practice of generosity in the Asian sangha sometimes has a different flow than it does in the West. The general term for this is *kor*, the process of offerings, aspirations, and compassionate practice that exists as a cycle between the lama, practitioners, donors, and those who are being practiced for. At the Rinchen Terdzö we saw this cycle when people made offerings to the teachers and the assembly, who then responded to the donors’ wishes and aspirations with formal practices of compassion.

I have pondered the differences between East and West with regard to the flow of wealth and requests. In the West, (leaving aside individual requests to teachers) most of the major retreats I’ve observed in and outside of Shambhala have begun with a formal offering of a mandala (in this case, a symbolic representation of the wealth of the whole universe) and a request for the teachings. At the end of the retreat a final mandala offering is made to the teacher in gratitude. Usually the final offering is a more elaborate one than the one at the start



The Sakyong Wangmo offering a mandala to Namkha Drimed Rinpoche

Photograph by Walker Blaine

of the program. We request the teacher to continue to teach and supplicate for the teacher's longevity along with the fulfillment of the teacher's vision and wishes. At that time, a monetary teaching gift is also given to the teacher. Short symbolic mandala offerings are made at the start of each teaching session throughout a program in the west, but except for the final mandala offering, there's

no money actually being given to the teacher until the end of the program.

In the West, we usually do not make monetary offerings and request specific practices to be done publically at tea every other day, and we don't spread a monetary offering out to every practitioner in the room, even if it is just 20 rupees a day. However, we do make personal offerings to the teachers and sometimes to some or all of the staff at the end the program. And the money we pay for a program will be used to support the hosting center in various ways. The Rinchen Terdzö, aside from our food and lodging, has been free, although all of us made personal offerings to His Eminence and the monastery during of the event.

Kor functions as a way to deliver requests from the students to the teacher, and as a way for the teacher to connect with the sangha. From another point of view, it is a way for people to connect with the teacher and generate merit, positive actions that result in happiness. However, as the Sakyong emphasized when he described kor to me the other day, it is the lama's responsibility to actually do the aspirations prayers, the meditations, and whatever else is being asked. Additionally, if someone in the assembly receives an offering and a request, they are also being asked to practice. This is part of how the sangha works in Asia. The meaning of kor continued to be provocative to me every time someone put money in my hands in the shrine room.

Sixteen years ago, I met a Cherokee pipe holder at Shambhala Mountain Center. He was helping his teacher conduct a short program for the staff. To be a pipe holder means to carry the lineage of the Native American wisdom tradition. He explained that as a pipe holder, one of his obligations was to pray for people whenever he was asked. There was no choice about this because the consequences were pretty dark if he let people down when they were asking for help.

To illustrate the commitment he'd taken on, the pipe holder told me a story. Once he was completely exhausted after a day of driving and he stopped at midnight to stay at a roadside motel in the middle of nowhere. He was about to collapse in bed when a knock came on his door. It turned out to be a couple of complete strangers. They requested him to do a pipe ceremony for someone who was ill. He had no idea how they had figured out that he was a Native American, let alone a pipe holder. He said he has no choice in these situations; he just does whatever is the right thing to do.

When I first saw donors giving money to monks in crowded shrine rooms in Asia a few years ago, I watched with a combination of curiosity and positive skepticism trying to figure out what was going on. It is well known that the lay communities in Asia have a great deal of faith in the ordained sangha. I didn't know whether this was blind faith or not, but suspected there was something I was missing. As I received the same offerings



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

along with the monastics and lay sangha in Orissa, it all started to make sense. Having learned more about the cycle of generosity, I was put in the position of being pushed toward compassion. "You felt it," the Sakyong said to me, "Somebody's hopes and aspirations and them giving you a little offering in the shrine hall. You feel badly disregarding it and spending the money somewhere, and you start to think, 'I should do whatever I am supposed to do.' "

Yesterday, as the Tibetans' aspirations were read aloud, I noticed that His Eminence sat and listened with a clear gaze and undistracted attention. I was moved by this. And even though I didn't understand what was being read, I knew that I could open my heart and make silent good wishes for everyone, for the people I knew and all those that I didn't. Kor, the cycle of generosity, is a cycle of kindness, love, and practice.

## Long-Life Conclusion, Jamgön Kongtrül Part Two

January 13th

Termas usually do not present themselves ready-made for an empowerment. The original terma is often rearranged and placed in liturgies in different ways to make it easier for people to enter the tradition and practice. This is also the case with the tantras, the root texts of Indian vajrayana. The tantras are hard to understand and have generated a large commentarial tradition in both India and Tibet. The essential practices of the tantras are presented in sadhanas just as they are with termas, which themselves are practices meant to revitalize the

vajrayana tradition that originates from the tantras.

In many cases, teachers other than the tertöns wrote many of the empowerment rituals found in the Rinchen Terdzö. I found this interesting because the Vidyadhara did not write the abhishekas for two of his most important terma practices, *The Sadhana Of Mahamudra* and the *Werma Sadhana*. The empowerment rituals were written by His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche and Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, respectively. Until seeing who wrote what in the Rinchen Terdzö, I had not realized this situation was so often the case.

Many of the texts in the Rinchen Terdzö came from earth termas discovered by Chogyur Lingpa, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, or Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye. An earth terma is a physical object that might be hidden in earth, rock, trees, buildings, lakes, and so on. It might be a text or a ritual item such as a crown. Sometimes this kind of terma is discovered in a 'casket,' which will have no discernable way to open it. I once saw a terma casket at a monastery while on pilgrimage in western Tibet. It was a completely spherical rock that looked like tiny bits of slightly pink granite had been pressed together into a completely solid ball about ten inches in diameter. A monk at the monastery said it was a terma that hadn't opened yet, but it would open if the conditions were right.

One of the most common types of earth terma is a terma scroll. When caskets are opened, they sometimes contain several of these. Terma scrolls are short pieces of parchment or fabric with writing on them, often only a single syllable, or a piece of text written by Yeshe Tsogyal. When a tertön reads the scroll it will trigger a memory of the time when Padmasambhava or another realized being first taught the text. At that point, the tertön will remember and write down the entire terma. On some occasions an entire written terma has been found in the form of an earth terma.

Because earth termas depend on external conditions, they are difficult to obtain. The conditions are not as simple as having the right key to open a lock. The right tertön must come at the right time to the right place with the right retinue, and so on. Mind terma, termas concealed in the mind of a tertön, also need the right conditions to be discovered. My suspicion is that publicly discovered earth termas are easier for people to have faith in because there is a physical object to rely on.

Today's abhishekas were for the last eleven of the Amitayus group, the first of three deities in the peaceful section of the second Logos. So far, we have received an average of seven or eight empowerments per day with a high of fifteen and a low of two. About half of today's empowerments were connected to termas discovered by Chogyur Lingpa, and nine of today's empowerment rituals were written by Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye.

Picking up the middle of the life story of Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye, we'll start with how the Rinchen Terdzö came to be. In 1855, when Jamgön Kongtrül was about 42 years old, he decided to assemble a collection of the major and minor termas he'd received over the years. He felt this was important to the continuity of the teachings and shared the idea with his teacher Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo who then gave Jamgön Kongtrül four additional volumes of termas and urged him forward.

Besides looking for signs of whether the creating the Rinchen Terdzö was the correct thing to do, Jamgön Kongtrül also asked Chogyur Lingpa if the project was appropriate. Asking a realized person a question like that was not like asking an ordinary friend for advice about what to do. Chogyur Lingpa only responded when he had a vision of Padmasambhava. In the vision, Padmasambhava said the project was a very good one. It came on New Year's Day, an auspicious time for such a message to arrive.

It took twelve more years to complete the task of assembling the first edition of the Rinchen Terdzö, which had grown substantially from its initial ten volumes. The collection was initially bestowed in 1868 when Jamgön Kongtrül was 55. This was when some of our great, great, great grandparents were alive. Jamgön Kongtrül continued work on the collection for an astonishing 21 more years, completing it in 1889. The Rinchen Terdzö reflects more than 33 years of work by Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye. Jamgön Kongtrül bestowed the Rinchen Terdzö six times, each time taking up to five months to do so. What is more amazing is that this was only one of many similar achievements in his career. We'll conclude his story in the coming weeks.

The atmosphere of the Amitayus abhishekas was remarkable; I didn't want to leave it. This was ironic given the nature of what were receiving. Each of the five transcendent Logos can express the transmutation of a particular emotion. In the case of enlightened speech, the emphasis of the practice is on the transmutation of grasping passion.

Besides the magnetic quality of these empowerments, the other thing that caught my attention was the order of the components in the abhishekas. The central elements were always the same, but their sequence seemed to change from empowerment to empowerment. The special features of the Amitayus empowerments seemed to be the bestowal of blessing by means of a long-life torma, long-life medicine, and a long-life arrow. The long-life arrow usually resided point-down in a stand on the front right corner the shrine, shrine southeast. It had ribbons in the colors of the five wisdoms (blue, white, yellow, red, and green) hanging from just below the tail feathers alongside a small mirror. Sometimes His Eminence waved the arrow while holding its point, circling the tail-feathers and ribbons in order to call and gather the elemental energies of long-life and prosperity.



Amitabha And Avalokiteshvara, Tara, And Their Six Children

January 14th

The number of Western students remaining at the Rinchen Terdzö diminished rapidly this week. Eight more, including three children, were scheduled to depart in the coming days. The only positive side of this seemed to be better seating, but that didn't do much for the sadness at seeing people go or their sadness at leaving.

After the Amitayus empowerments came those for Amitabha, the next deity in the peaceful section of the second Logos. Like Amitayus, Amitabha is a transcendent buddha, rather than a historical person like Shakyamuni. Amitabha is connected with the dharmakaya aspect of enlightened mind, mind beyond reference point. You'll recall that Amitayus was related to the sambhogakaya, the joyful dynamic display of enlightened mind. Both deities are red, the color of the speech family. Their attire can illustrate their difference in emphasis. Amitayus, as the energetic aspect, wears regal jewels and silks, but Amitabha is depicted wearing monastic robes, which emphasize simplicity and renunciation. It is important to remember that although these deities are different expressions of awakened mind, they are essentially one.

Amitabha, rather than being connected with the vitality and longevity, is connected with our well-being after we leave this life. The practices of Amitabha have to do with *Sukhavati*, in English, *The Place Of Bliss* or *Dewachen* in Tibetan. Sukhavati is the pure realm of Amitabha, a complete world that surrounds his mind and aspiration of pure awakening. Sukhavati is a realm where there are no obstacles to practice. Beings taking birth there have a straightforward path to attaining full realization. The practices of Amitabha are aimed at creating the conditions to be reborn in Sukhavati where it is said understanding the teachings is almost effortless, even for people without extraordinarily good karma. Practices of Sukhavati are done in preparation for one's own death and to help others when they are in the time of transition to their next life. In the Chinese and Japanese Buddhist traditions there are schools that focus almost exclusively on this approach to meditation.

There were six empowerments for Amitabha. All of them had a very spacious quality. One lasted less than ten minutes. Speed or duration was not a measure of anything because every empowerment points to awakening from a different perspective. One title I especially liked was *The Root-Empowerment for The Space Dharma Practice Of The Realm Of Sukhavati, combined with the support of the eight auspicious symbols and the seven possessions of a Chakravartin, in accordance with its arrangement as a text*. The *Space Dharma* is a terma cycle revealed by Rigdzin Mingyur Dorje. A Chakravartin is a universal monarch, the highest secular rebirth possible. A chakravartin is the worldly equivalent of buddhahood; it is the best possible achievement in life from a worldly, rather than spiritual, perspective.



After the conclusion of the Amitabha empowerments, we entered the last section of the peaceful Speech Logos, the empowerments of Avalokiteshvara (Tib. *Chenrezig*). His name means, 'The Lord Who Sees All The World.' Avalokiteshvara sees the entire world with the eyes of compassion; he is the embodiment of a buddha's compassionate love for all beings.



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

The most well known form of Avalokiteshvara is white with four arms, seated on a lotus. Two of his hands hold a wish-fulfilling jewel at his heart, and the other two hands are slightly raised near his shoulders, with the right hand holding a crystal mala and the left hand holding a lotus flower. His mantra is probably the most famous one in Buddhism: OM MANI PADME HUM.

In the mahayana sutras, Avalokiteshvara is one of the foremost bodhisattva disciples of the Buddha. The most well known scripture where he is featured is the *Sutra Of The Heart Of Transcendent Knowledge*, commonly called *The Heart Sutra*. This text, chanted daily in many mahayana Buddhist lineages, is an account of a short dialogue between Avalokiteshvara and Shariputra, who was one of the two principle monastic disciples of the Buddha and exceedingly smart and penetrating. The dialogue begins when Shariputra is impelled by the force of the Buddha's meditation to ask Avalokiteshvara how to practice in the most profound way, how to meditate on emptiness.

Avalokiteshvara has a deep connection with Tibet. Many of the early Tibetan kings were emanations of Avalokiteshvara. The legend of the origin of the Tibetan people is that they arose from the union of a monkey and a rock-demoness. The monkey was Avalokiteshvara and the demoness was the female bodhisattva, Tara. They had six children corresponding to the six realms of beings (humans, gods, asuras, animals, hungry ghosts, and pretas). Somehow these six children got along well and played together near the mountainside cave where they were born in Tsetang, nowadays a few hours drive from Lhasa.

There were more than sixty empowerments of Avalokiteshvara in the Rinchen Terdzö. There are a variety of ways to explain this. One way is to say that Padmasambhava and Avalokiteshvara are both part of the speech family of deities; since Padmasambhava is a source of the termas, there are a lot of speech family termas. Another way to explain the great number of Avalokiteshvara termas has to do with how a great tertön is recognized. All great tertöns reveal termas of Avalokiteshvara in addition to termas of Padmasambhava and dzogchen. Since all the great tertöns are represented in the Rinchen Terdzö, many

Avalokiteshvara terms appear in the collection.

## Day Off, A Thousand Page Guidebook

January 15th

Today was a day off so that Lhunpo Rinpoche could take time to recover from an illness. In the morning, the monastery performed a Medicine Buddha practice for Lhunpo Rinpoche and Namkha Drimed Rinpoche, although His Eminence was in good health. The day off presented an opportunity to unwind a bit. People spent their time in conversations, visiting the tailor to get chubas made, sitting in the sun, or practicing at the monastery. The weather, hillsides, and landscape in Orissa have been likened to Tuscany, Italy. It was a superb day to relax into a gentle state of mind.

In the afternoon, Patricia and I went to visit the head chöpön, Lama Tenzin. The purpose of our visit was to get a better sense of the order of the empowerments in the Rinchen Terdzö. As we sat in the chöpön's office—which was filled with texts, offerings, and vases (all cleaned and standing in a row for the day off)—Lama Tenzin explained that the empowerments were being presented according to the sequence laid out in a manual for the Rinchen Terdzö that was written by the 15th Karmapa, Khakyab Dorje. This manual was a four-volume, 2000 page text appended to the end of the Rinchen Terdzö in its 111-volume reprinting. While the Rinchen Terdzö took an amazing 33 years to complete, writing a guidebook to it took eight more. The 15th Karmapa, like the 10th Trungpa, was a student of Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye.

The Karmapa's manual was invaluable for many reasons. Jamgön Kongtrül wrote his own manual of notes in a condensed form that was easy to misunderstand without great knowledge or additional help. The Karmapa expanded everything and filled in many details. For example, the empowerment rituals often require additional verses and instructions that are difficult to find in the original publication of the Rinchen Terdzö. Sometimes additional liturgies were not even included in the original collection. The Karmapa very thoughtfully put everything together in a sequential package. His Eminence used the specific empowerment texts and Khakyab Dorje's manual when he gave the abhishekas. Both sat before him on a two-tiered stand that looked a little like a miniature hardwood armchair.

The Karmapa also presented an alternate order for the empowerments of the Rinchen Terdzö. His sequence is often used when giving the Rinchen Terdzö because of the difficulties in giving the empowerments in the order laid out by Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye. Jamgön Kongtrül originally ordered the Rinchen Terdzö according to type of deity and practice, such as the main mahayoga divisions of guru, yidam, dakini, and dharmapala. Dividing the practices up like this is helpful for seeing the big picture, but any inter-related practices get

separated in Jamgön Kongtrül's progression of empowerments. Separating the inter-related practices has a significant impact on the time it takes to bestow the abhishekas.

The inter-related terma practices form something like family groups. The practices in these groups often use the same shrine. For example, the Könchok Chidu has a trio of practices, those of the guru, the yidam, and the dakini. If these empowerments are given all at once, the shrine only needs to be set up once and the teacher only needs to do the preliminary practice in the morning once. If these three empowerments are bestowed according to the order given by Jamgön Kongtrül, the shrine must be set up three different times, weeks apart, during three different sections of the Rinchen Terdzö. When all is said and done, bestowing the Rinchen Terdzö according to Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye's outline takes a lot longer, and there's much more work for the chöpons. Seeing this, the Karmapa reordered the termas so that each shrine only had to be set up only once. This still adds up to creating at least 254 shrines, but I shudder to think what the situation would be like otherwise. I suspect the Karmapa's manual is why it the Rinchen Terdzö in Orissa was bestowed in three months, instead of five, which is the length of the longer Rinchen Terdzös I have read about.

Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye's great vision saved all these practices and instructions from the brink of extinction at the end of the 19th century. Without his work, it is unlikely many of these teachings would have survived the devastation of Tibet that was the backdrop to Trungpa Rinpoche's empowerment of Namkha Drimed Rinpoche at Yak Gompa in the late 1950's. The 15th Karmapa's brilliance was to make everything easier for everyone when giving the empowerments. The Karmapa provided the fine-tuning needed to easily bring these teachings smoothly into the present day.

## Getting It Right

January 16th

The abhishekas resumed this afternoon although the reading transmissions were postponed so that Lhunpo Rinpoche could rest more. The extra time in the morning allowed an interview with Jigme Rinpoche at his residence in the Ripa Ladrang. Jigme Rinpoche said that everyone was well and that Lhunpo Rinpoche was recovering from a mild strain of chicken pox.

The abhishekas in the afternoon continued the series of empowerments related to Avalokiteshvara. As I mentioned earlier, Patricia Kirigin has been working with two abhisheka lists from previous Rinchen Terdzös. The most complete list came from Peter Roberts' work at His Eminence Tai Situ Rinpoche's bestowal of the Rinchen Terdzö in 2006. After we met with Lama Tenzin, Patricia was able to start checking this list against the Rinchen Terdzö itself and the 15th Karmapa's manual. Just before the abhishekas started this afternoon, we discovered the monastery's empowerment list was missing two major 'sub-empowerments' from its

schedule for the day.

We were confused by this and didn't know which list was right. However, until today it had been like being a week behind in chemistry homework when the abhishekas started each afternoon. Today it turned out we had a better list than the one the monastery had printed. This was like being only two days behind in chemistry homework. Several rinpoches, khenpos, and lamas quickly signaled they wanted to read our list when we started the two unmentioned empowerments. At the end of the day, Patricia Kirigin had a chat about the missing sub-empowerments with Lama Tenzin, who laughed and told her in Tibetan, "That series was very, very difficult."

### Seen From Above

January 17th



Photograph by Walker Blaine

This photograph is of a four-meter square of a mandala of Avalokiteshvara painted on the ceiling of the shrine room. It is also a diagram for one of the Avalokiteshvara practices contained in the Rinchen Terdzö. As you can see, the deity is pictured in the middle of a six-petal lotus flower. Each petal holds one syllable of the mantra of Avalokiteshvara, OM MA NI PAD ME HUM, which is spelled out in Tibetanized Sanskrit. The squarish frame for the round lotus is a diagram of the palace the deity lives in. The irregular white circles are hanging lamps viewed from below.

This kind of mandala painting gives a rough approximation of a visualization practice. Avalokiteshvara is sitting on a lotus in the middle of a palace. The painting is somewhat like an architectural drawing; the palace itself is square. However, as you can see, at the center of each of the four walls wall is a strange T-shaped middle section. At this point the diagram is showing how the four gates to the palace are seen from the outside. These gates are similar to the gates to The Great Stupa Of Dharmakaya at Shambhala Mountain Center in Colorado.<sup>6</sup> Just beyond the walls of the palace is the perimeter of a second lotus on which the palace of resides. In general, lotuses symbolize

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<sup>6</sup> For a photograph of the Great Stupa of Dharmakaya, please turn to the first essay in the end of this book.

purity because they grow in dirty water, but are unstained by the mud below.

## Tourists And Teenage Exorcists

January 18th

On most days, Indian tourists visited the monastery during the afternoon empowerments. The busiest days brought fifty or more onlookers. Usually they arrived around four o'clock. Sundays and Indian national holidays were the busiest. The Indian men tended to dress in casual Western shirts and pants. The women often wore amazingly bright saris, usually in a solid color like a deep blue or an eye-popping vermillion fringed with intricately laced golden thread. Some of the tourists, whom I guessed were Bangladeshi, had very dark skin, wide eyes, and the women wore lots of bangles. The children often dressed in Western clothes. The young boys tended to look at the monks and Westerners in the crowd, while the young women tended to focus on His Eminence and the shrine.

In the midst of the oddity of practicing with 800 Tibetans while being lightly scrutinized by Indian tourists, I was impressed by the Indians' general sense of decorum and sensitivity toward the sacredness of the space. Occasionally people snapped pictures, but for the most part they stood silently, somewhat awestruck by the splendor of the shrine room. Hindu culture has a strong tradition of pilgrimage and respect for gurus. A chöpon was always on hand to guide people through the shrine room, making sure they could cross the space via an aisle and therefore pass before Namkha Drimed Rinpoche. Sometimes a group of tourists, usually only men, would sit down in the shrine room before leaving. The ones who stayed would receive whatever empowerment icon, vase water, or implement the rinpoches, lamas, and chöpons were bestowing blessings with at the time. His Eminence always seemed to make eye contact and give a happy smile to all the Indians passing through the room.

Today we received empowerments for several forms of red Avalokiteshvara, more commonly known as *Gyalwa Gyamtso* (Skt. *Jinasagara*, Ocean of the Victorious Ones). None of these were for the Gyalwa Gyamtso practiced during the Söpa Chöling retreat; that practice is not drawn from a terma. Many Western Tibetan Buddhist centers offer the four-armed, white Avalokiteshvara practice as a gateway meditation, much in the style of starting sitting meditation. This is traditional, but it gave me the wrong idea that Avalokiteshvara was somehow a short, introductory practice. The abhishekas this week showed me otherwise because they varied widely in their components, lengths, and what the recipients did during the empowerments. This was a striking contrast to the Amitayus abhishekas, which always had the same basic components although their order shifted during of the empowerments.

Recently, a few empowerments had a section for a fire offering, a practice where fire is used as a basis to make offerings and to demonstrate the ability of the deity (itself a symbol of

one's own awakened nature) to burn up obstacles. Today large bonfires were readied in the courtyard during the afternoon break. We thought these would be somehow part of the empowerments, but they were used after we had closed the shrine for the day. The fires were part of a *sur* offering, which is a monthly event here at the monastery and coincidentally a practice done in conjunction with Avalokiteshvara practice.

During a *sur* offering, food, bits of clothing and so forth, are burned in a fire to assist beings in the bardo, the junction between this life and the next. It's said that beings in the bardo can make use of this kind of offering. If the offerings are made in the context of meditation practice, the beings in the bardo can also get a bit of spiritual help in their journey forward. The *sur* offering was performed after dinner by some of the lamas at the monastery. The young monks sat behind them on the steps to the monastery. The boys chanted OM MANI PADME HUM as the *sur* offering was made at the small bonfires.

Today also was an exorcism day. In the West, Buddhist exorcism practice is done based on reciting the *Sutra Of The Heart Of Transcendent Knowledge*, reciting a mantra related to emptiness, and concluding with a short chant that declares the view of emptiness while exorcising the four maras. The four maras are four styles of losing genuine contact with our basic goodness. We exorcise our own solid view of reality rather than a ghost. The final chant is done three times with a clap of the hands here and there in the last lines.

At the monastery, the same kind of practice was done, but with a lot more chants, a lot more vigor, and a lot—and I mean a lot—more clapping. The monks blazed through *The Heart Sutra* at a pace almost unimaginable in the West. When we realized the chant we were racing through was *The Heart Sutra*, it was impossible not to laugh. The monks, especially the younger ones who'd already memorized the chants, got completely excited reading at such high speed. At times there was a near frenzy to the pace of the liturgy. I don't know what actually got exorcised, but I am sure it had a hard time staying around during the chants. It was great to see the monks having so much fun in the shrine room.

## The Chödak

Interview With Jigme Rinpoche

A *chödak* or dharma lord is the person whom a tertön gives the responsibility of spreading a terma. In the Nyingma lineage, tertöns usually appoint a family member as the chödak. Jigme Rinpoche is the chödak for at least some of Namkha Drimed Rinpoche's termas, and Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche is the chödak for the Shambhala termas. At the start of the transcript below, I had asked Jigme Rinpoche why someone other than the original tertön had written some of the empowerment texts in the Rinchen Terdzö.

Jigme Rinpoche: Well, I think there are a few reasons for this. First of all, there are differences in the termas when they are first found by a tertön. Some termas come complete with the instruction manuals and everything. Other termas come only with the root text. Sometimes a particular tertön is directly linked to the empowerment of whatever terma he has discovered. In this case, the tertön is in such a state of mind that he doesn't require a manual to go along with the text. The empowerment of the disciple is more about the tertön's mind-transmission taking place directly. In this case the tertön is using the root text only, and that's fine.

Walker Blaine: I have heard stories like that with the Vidyadhara's termas. [*The Sadhana Of Mahamudra* and the *Shambhala termas*.]

JR: Yes. But in order for this to develop into a lineage, a tradition has to follow. The later teachers who may be transmitting the terma have to have a manual. This is because it is not the same mind as the tertön giving the empowerment; they are not the founder of the terma. Therefore they have to rely on a written manual to do the job of transmitting the empowerment properly, with the proper respect. So you often find that the later teachers write the manuals for the original root texts.

That's one reason. The second reason is that some of the termas are too old, the tertöns are too early, and so the manuals have been lost somewhere. Only the root text remains. In this case there is an urgent need to preserve the terma and a manual is needed. Therefore an equally qualified master will write the manual.

There are other situations when the text is just too complicated to be easily transmittable. In these cases the texts are simplified based on a more complex, complicated manual. This is so that there is a more regular way to give the empowerment.

WB: Does that responsibility fall to the chödak?

JR: It usually falls to the chödak. Sometimes it falls to someone who comes along on the path later, who is totally devoted to that path, and has some signs indicating that he or she should be writing this.

WB: Would you say a little more about what a chödak is?

JR: I think that the role of a chödak is basically to continue the teaching properly as a proper recipient, a proper vessel in whose body, speech, or mind the entire lineage of the tertön's teachings can be truly transferred. It goes to the proper person,

into the right hands. This channel is based on either having a blood link or on someone who has a really good relationship with the tertön in terms of samaya, in terms of devotion. That is who becomes the recipient.

The chödak can be a physical son or a spiritual son. Sometimes it can be both in one person. The actual role of the chödak is to keep the teaching from disappearing, and to make good use of the teaching so that it is established properly and begins to be of proper benefit. That is one of the main reasons behind there being a chödak.

The tertön and chödak have a relationship from previous lives. Most often they have entered a particular mandala together during in an empowerment bestowed at the time of Guru Rinpoche. Somewhere the tertön and chödak have shared one common mandala. That's where the relationship started. And then, after many, many lifetimes, they are born as father and son [spiritually and/or physically]. This is the time when they have a particular role to play with that particular text.

WB: I have read that the tertön does not spread the terma too widely and that the chödak is the one to do that.

JR: Exactly. That's the point. Sometimes it depends on who the chödak is. For example, if the chödak happens to be a Karmapa or a Dalai Lama, the teaching is sure to spread like fire. It's like that. And in other cases it could be that the chödak is very simple guy, but a great practitioner. It doesn't mean that is wrong person. He can be highly accomplished, a real spiritually accomplished person, but he's maybe not very well known. Then the terma teachings begin to benefit on a smaller scale. There are different varieties.

Some tertöns do seem to appoint a chödak who has a great popular influence. This is driven by circumstances. But this person is not always the real lineage heir. In this case the chödak would be someone who could take care of the teaching and spread it to many places. But it might not mean this is a spiritually proper person who has actually accomplished the practice.

WB: Why would a tertön choose such a vehicle?

JR: I think it just depends on each tertön. They each have a different purpose in their mind. Sometimes they feel the terma teaching is going to be of more benefit if it reaches to more people at that particular time in history. If so, then they will do it like that. At other times they think it will be beneficial if only a few people receive the teaching. So, they sometimes they will pass on the lineage in that way.



I think we can never actually question why a tertön does certain things. It's beyond our imagination. Chödaks play a very important role for the spread and the upkeep of the actual terma teachings.

## At Yak Gompa

January 19th

In 1958 Yak Tulku Rinpoche invited Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche to bestow the Rinchen Terdzö at Yak Gompa in Eastern Tibet. *Gompa* is the Tibetan word for monastery. This was the first of the two meetings between Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and Namkha Drimed Rinpoche. The second happened during their escape from Tibet when they met at Pema Kö. Given the historical, visionary, and lineage connections between them, it is clear they would have liked to spend more time together.

As I watched the relationship between His Eminence and the Sakyong during the last six and a half weeks, it became clear to me that the relationship between the teacher and the primary disciple at a lineage transmission is powerful and intimate. It must have been this way at Yak Gompa too.

The communication from Namkha Drimed Rinpoche to Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche has been very direct and filled with love and precision. Over the years I've received several abhishekas as part of a group, most of the time without someone being empowered as a lineage holder for a particular tradition. There was a special quality to the situation at the Rinchen Terdzö. Everything was presented to the Sakyong in a vivid, warm, and personal manner.



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

Recent conversations with Jigme Rinpoche helped me piece together a better picture of the relationship between the Ripas and the Trungpas. His Eminence's grandfather, Drubwang Ngedon Rinpoche (1844-1901), received the Rinchen Terdzö from Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye. Drubwang Ngedon Rinpoche passed the transmission of the Rinchen Terdzö on to Namkha Drimed Rinpoche's father, Drubwang Jigme Tsewang Chokdrup Rinpoche (1891-

1954). The young 10th Trungpa, Chökyi Nyinche (1875-1938), became a close student Jamgön Kongtrül toward the end of Jamgön Kongtrül's life, and later he became a root guru to His Eminence's father, Drubwang Jigme Tsewang Chokdrub. At some point the 10th Trungpa also requested the Rinchen Terdzö from Drubwang Jigme Tsewang Chokdrub, possibly to support and strengthen the lineages shared by the Ripas and Trungpas since they often taught in each other's districts. The Rinchen Terdzö was unable to be passed along at that time because Drubwang Jigme Tsewang Chokdrub was unwell when the Rinchen Terdzö could have happened. However, the 10th Trungpa's request for Jigme Tsewang Chokdrub's lineage set in motion the course of events that led to the Rinchen Terdzö being bestowed in Orissa.

The 10th Trungpa's wish to receive the Rinchen Terdzö from the Drubwang Jigme Tsewang Chokdrub made Namkha Drimed Rinpoche feel that receiving the Rinchen Terdzö from Chögyam Trungpa was very important, and so he made every effort to go to Yak Gampa. It was very brave of him to travel to the empowerments considering the fact that the chaos brought by the arrival of the Chinese in Tibet had destabilized everything. At the same time, it is amazing that a ritual as complex as the Rinchen Terdzö could have been completed at all during that troubled era. Reading through Trungpa Rinpoche's description of the Rinchen Terdzö in *Born In Tibet* gives one a sense of the undercurrent of pain, fear, and tragedy that was in the background of everyone's minds.

His Eminence said that during the Rinchen Terdzö he continuously perceived Trungpa Rinpoche as a bodhisattva, meaning that he perceived him in a pure way and not as an ordinary person. This is a general instruction given to anyone receiving an empowerment; one does one's best to let go of everyday habits of seeing things, and tries to see the world as a sacred realm in which the teacher resides as a realized being. This outlook is also the outcome of realizing the meaning of the practices bestowed in an empowerment. A stable recognition of basic goodness, of our buddha nature, will result in purifying our perceptions and allow us to become much more effective in helping others. His Eminence, however, was being humble in his description of how he perceived Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. I think he actually experienced pure perception and genuinely perceived Trungpa Rinpoche as a realized being; it was not something he had to manufacture. Namkha Drimed Rinpoche was not an ordinary student, struggling to remind himself to stay in a good frame of mind.

At one point during the Rinchen Terdzö at Yak Gampa, Namkha Drimed Rinpoche became very ill, so ill that Yak Tulku Rinpoche, the host for the event, feared the empowerments would have to stop. It would have been dangerous to delay anything given the political situation in Tibet at that time. Already the schedule had been pushed to the brink, starting an hour and a half earlier than we started, and going hours later into the night. Yak Tulku Rinpoche went to get Trungpa Rinpoche and brought him to Namkha Drimed

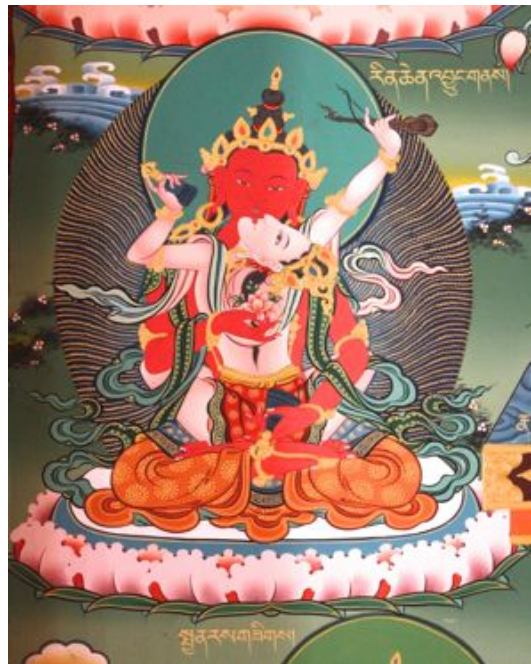
Rinpoche's room. He asked Trungpa Rinpoche to use his phurba to bless Namkha Rinpoche. A phurba is a three-sided metal dagger, a symbol of the simultaneous penetration of the poisons of passion, aggression, and ignorance by the dagger of awareness.

Trungpa Rinpoche's phurba was not a normal dagger. It was a terma object very precious to him. Jigme Rinpoche explained, "The phurba that my father saw was bronze, which is usually what terma objects are made of. My father said it was very powerful, and it was very dark, very old. At the same time it had a lot of *ziji* [Tib. brilliance, confidence]. It was about twelve inches long. It was probably one of the most important objects Trungpa Rinpoche had at that time." After being blessed by the phurba, Namkha Rinpoche had a dream of the dharma protectors pulling demons away from him and he quickly became well again.

## Avalokiteshvara In Union

January 20th

Here is a photograph of another form of Avalokiteshvara, a form of the deity that is union with a consort. The imagery of union is a very common motif in vajrayana Buddhism. It generally symbolizes the inseparability of compassion and the complete realization of emptiness, which is of state of buddhahood. Today we nearly concluded the Avalokiteshvara empowerments, the last of the peaceful yidams of the second logos.



Photograph by Walker Blaine

This evening the Sakyong invited some sangha members to watch Barack Obama's presidential inauguration with him on CNN. It was an animate evening that included short visits from the Sakyong Wangmo, Jigme Rinpoche, and their mother Khandro Chime who served us treats from the kitchen. Marvin Robinson, who has worked in politics, filled us in on who was who and provided a surprisingly large number of answers to the Sakyong's questions. All of us were very impressed by President Obama's speech. May this world grow into a place of peace and happiness for the benefit for all beings.

## Fasting, Hayagriva And Monkish Antics

January 21st

Nyung Nay, the last practice presented in the Avalokiteshvara section, is not a terma. It was included in the Rinchen Terdzö because Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye felt it was essential for

the complete transmission of the teachings. Although Nyung Nay is not currently practiced in Shambhala, it is practiced in all four lineages in the Tibetan Buddhist world.

Nyung Nay is a fasting practice done in conjunction with meditation on the one thousand-armed form of Avalokiteshvara. It is performed in two-day cycles, with the participants taking precepts including the vows to not kill, steal, lie, drink alcohol, or engage in sexual activity during the entire course of the retreat. On the second day, the practitioner is completely silent and continues the practice while fasting. The sur offering is usually done during a Nyung Nay retreat.

Although I've not done Nyung Nay, I've read that the hunger and discomfort in the context of this practice can be used to increase the meditator's experience of compassion for others. The two-day cycle of Nyung Nay can be practiced many times in succession. It is sometimes done one hundred cycles in a row during group retreat. A few years ago, there was a yogi at Kyere monastery near Surmang who was in his 15th continuous year of Nyung Nay. The nun who created the practice, Bhikshuni Palmo, healed herself of leprosy through the Nyung Nay and could speak to Avalokiteshvara as if in person.

After the conclusion of the Avalokiteshvara abhishekas, we began the empowerments for Hayagriva, the wrathful practice of the second Logos. Hayagriva is one of the main practices at Rigon Thupten Mindrolling because it is a specialty of the Taksham terma lineage, the main lineage carried in the Ripa family line. There are several different forms of Hayagriva painted in the shrine room, all of them quite fierce and fiery.

The speech family altogether is connected with the western direction, and although it is the second Logos, it was presented third in Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's *The Lion's Roar: An Introduction to Tantra*:

Then in the west, number three, there is the padma-family heruka, Hayagriva, who is related with passion. This is not passion in the sense of magnetizing alone, but also in the sense of proclaiming your passion. Hayagriva is associated with the horse, so Hayagriva's principle is referred to as the horse's neigh, the voice of the horse. The three neighs of a horse destroy the body, speech, and mind of Rudra. The symbol is a red lotus with flames as petals, a burning lotus, a burning heart, the proclamation of passion. But at the same time, this is a wrathful figure. *pp. 197-198*

The imagery of Hayagriva describes the transformation of neurotic passion into compassion, into love. It is not talking about the kind of running-amok passion that Rudra is the embodiment of. However, in order for passion to be transformed there needs to be something that can communicate with that neurotic part of us. This seems to be the specialty

of Hayagriva. How a horse's head appeared on top of Hayagriva is explained in the myth of Rudra, the personification of the absolute worst expression of our own negativity. Rudra was tamed by Hayagriva who entered Rudra's body and came out of the top of his head in the form of a horse.

Several empowerments over the last few days were restricted to people who had completed ngöndro practice. This included about half the Westerners who remained at the Rinchen Terdzö and about eighty of the four hundred people in the monastic community. It was still a question how the lay practitioners fit in because almost none of them were in the shrine room during these empowerments.

Monkish antics continued, by the way. An unreported prize-winning moment was seeing an inspired young monk imitate a double drum, called a *damaru*, by holding a round yellow tea roll with a ritual blindfold on one side and a cloth flower on the other as 'thwackers'. Yesterday, I watched a seated monk carefully edge his thigh into the path of a friend who was prostrating without paying attention. This resulted in a rather amusing chest-first landing during the final prostration.

## The Sakyong's Role

January 22nd

His Eminence's attention on the Sakyong during the empowerments can be illustrated by the manner in which he presented the *tsakali*. Tsakali are small painted cards, which are used to display the deities and symbols bestowed during an empowerment. They often get presented in groups, such as the five buddha families, the eight bodhisattvas, or the seven precious possessions of a universal monarch. When His Eminence bestowed the tsakali on the Sakyong during an abhisheka, he always displayed them one-by-one as he recited the corresponding verses, visualizations, and so on. After displaying all the tsakali to the Sakyong individually, His Eminence would gather them into one bunch in his hand, and recite the final verses or mantra of the series as he briefly bestowed the tsakali on the other four main recipients in turn.

I asked Jigme Rinpoche for a picture of how the abhishekas were bestowed upon the different people at the Rinchen Terdzö. He explained:

A tülku is considered to be someone who is able to transmit the dharma to others. It doesn't matter who the tülku is, every tülku is supposed to receive all the transmissions of the different lineages, particularly of their own lineage, through the *abhishekas*, *tris* [instructions], and *lungs* [reading transmissions]. A tülku is supposed to be a treasure vase of all the transmissions. Then, because of that, a tülku is able to

transmit them to others. Now, whether the tülku will transmit them to others, or whether there will actually be others who request those transmissions, depends on each tülku's situation. But generally, as a tülku they are seen as an object to whom all these precious transmissions should be given. That is one point.

The second point is that out of all the tülkus at an empowerment like this, normally one or two are seen to be someone completely capable of passing on the transmission. At the time of an abhisheka like this one, someone will be officially appointed, so to speak, as someone of leading capacity from among all the people. This will be done at the end of the abhisheka. I believe most probably it will be the Sakyong and my brother as well, Lhunpo Tulku Rinpoche. I have already been appointed in Tibet when my father bestowed the Rinchen Terdzö the first time. I was one of the main people appointed as a holder of the transmission at that particular time.

Then there are all the khenpos, tülkus, the Sakyong Wangmo, and my sisters. From our community, all the sisters are regarded in the same way, because they are the daughters of His Eminence; they are part of the family. They usually receive such transmissions in case of the eventuality that they may be needed to transmit them if there is a necessity. Otherwise, somehow it is a male dominated lineage; the sons in the family continue to be the lineage holders.

From another perspective, one of the purposes of giving such a transmission is so that everybody who wishes to follow the path of vajrayana properly can have a transmission that will enable them to practice and move forward. Without this it is impossible to begin any practice in the vajrayana. You must have an abhisheka or initiation from a proper teacher. This is absolutely necessary for somebody to embark on a spiritual journey on the vajrayana level of practice. That's why the empowerment is not only giving the transmission so that it continues in the future, but it also enables people to seriously practice all the different yidams, gurus, dakinis, whatever is applicable to them. Wherever they might go in the future, they will have the abhisheka inside them and so they can practice.

So the abhisheka goes out in two ways: one for the purpose of holding that transmission, and the other for continuing the practice.



## The Day In Words

January 23rd

While for many of us, reading the entire list of empowerments of the Rinchen Terdzö will not be enticing, a taste of the list may be interesting for one and all, and with this in mind, I included the draft translation of the today's empowerments below. The titles of the empowerments and the terma lineages are public knowledge even though some of the empowerments were restricted. It is the tradition to publish a list of the empowerments in a book that is distributed at the end of each Rinchen Terdzö. This is most likely a modern convention as paper was in short supply in Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye's time. The empowerment book usually contains the history of the lineage, a brief explanation of the Rinchen Terdzö, the names of the principle participants, and so on. A Tibetan edition of such a book was presented to the recipients of the empowerments in Orissa at the conclusion of the Rinchen Terdzö.



Photograph by Benny Fong

Today's list will give you a sense of the complexity of what is preserved in the collection. Every title seems to ask a dozen questions about the author, the meaning of the text, the source of the terma. When I started researching the Rinchen Terdzö I sent some questions to Matthieu Ricard, one of the close students of His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. He is extremely knowledgeable, genuine, and generous. He said that as far as he knew, in his 25 years of working with the Rinchen Terdzö, he'd heard of no analytical work done on it in English.

On the following page is Patricia's list, minus the Tibetan fonts. The shortened Tibetan for the titles are rendered in the Wylie lettering system created by Turrell Wylie in 1940's to transliterate Tibetan into Roman letters. The Wylie system does not represent a phonetic way to read Tibetan. Since the titles in the list are for wrathful practices that overcome our negativity, the titles are more pointed than those of the peaceful abhishekas. You'll notice that the names have a poetic ring along with some Sanskrit and Tibetan words mixed in.

23 January, 2009

**[Continuation of the Red Hayagriva, Padma Speech Section:]**

1. dbang chen dregs pa kun 'dul dbang

*The Accomplishment Of The Single Secret*: the ripening empowerment for Maheshvara who tames all the arrogant spirits, from *The Liberation Bindu's Spontaneous Liberation Of View*, in accordance with the manual adornment.

Tertön: Sherab Özer

Empowerment author: Jamgön Lodrö Thaye

2. bsnyen dbang

The recitation empowerment for Maheshvara who tames all the arrogant spirits from *The Liberation Bindu's Spontaneous Liberation Of View*

Tertön: Sherab Özer

Empowerment author: The terma text

3. bka' srung gshog rgod ma'i srog dbang

The life-force-empowerment for the protector of that practice, Shog Göma ("the one with wildly flapping wings")

Tertön: Sherab Özer

Empowerment author: [Not found in the empowerment list, probably Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye.]

4. rta phag yid bzhin nor bu'i dbang

The wish-fulfilling empowerment for the profound Dharma of Varahi and Hayagriva according to *Union With The Supreme Wisdom*

Tertön: Rigdzin Jatsön Nyingpo

Empowerment author: Jamgön Lodrö Thaye

5. gnam chos rta mgrin bar chad kun sel kyi dbang

The empowerment for the Hayagriva who eliminates all obstacles, from the profound oral lineage of *The Space Dharma Mind Terma*, according to *The Space Dharma's Dharani-empowerment*

Tertön: Rigdzin Mingyur Dorje [Karmapa Khakyab Dorje's manual lists this entry with Jatsön Nyingpo, without mentioning Rigdzin Mingyur Dorje.]

Empowerment author: Karma Chagme



6. yi dam dgongs 'dus rta mchog rol pa'i dbang 'grel spyi sdom rtsa ba'i dbang chen mo /  
padma r'a ga'i bum bzang ltar

The great root empowerment for the preparatory and main empowerments for the general summary of *Hayagriva's Display* from *The Union Of The Minds Of The Yidams*, according to *The Excellent Vase of Rubies*

Tertön Taksham Samten Lingpa

Empowerment author: Jamgön Lodrö Thaye

7. rtsa gum spyi'i rje gnang/ rta mgrin yi ge drug mo'i rje gnag/ gcig shes kun grol ltar

The authorization of the blessing of the six syllables for the Hayagriva of *Hayagriva's Display* from *The Union Of The View Of The Yidams*, a general authorization of the three roots according to *The One Thing that Liberates All*

Tertön: Taksham Samten Lingpa

Empowerment author: Jamgön Lodrö Thaye

8. snyen brgyud rta mchog rol pa'i snying thig dbang/ rta mchog dgyes pa'i bzhad sgra ltar

The root empowerment and life-empowerment for the *Heart Drop Of Hayagriva's Display* from the oral lineage, combined with the profound instructions according to the terma text, according to *The Laughter Of Pleased Hayagriva*

Tertön: Jamyang Khyentse

Empowerment author: Jamgön Lodrö Thaye

Author of the instructions: The terma text

9. zab bdun zangs byang ma'i rta mgrin dbang zab yang phyungs dmar po'i rtsa dbang

The root empowerment for The Red Expelling Profound Powerful Hayagriva, from The Seven Profundities' Copper Mountain Manual in accordance with the terma text

Tertön: Chogyur Lingpa

Empowerment author: The terma text

10. de'i gtor dbang

The terma empowerment for *The Essential Meaning Of Hayagriva* from the scriptural tradition of *The Seven Profundities' Copper Mountain Manual* in accordance with The Dew Drop of the Lotus

Tertön: Chogyur Lingpa

Empowerment author: Jamgön Lodrö Thaye

**New Section: Wrathful Hayagriva, extremely wrathful Black Hayagriva**

11. rta mgrin nag po'i sgrub thabs kyi rjes gnam/ bgegs 'dul ral gri gnam lcags ltar

The authorization for the sadhana of black Hayagriva in accordance with *The Sword Of Sky-Iron That Subdues Evil Spirits*

Tertön: Bodhisattva Dawa Gyaltsen

Empowerment author: Jamgön Lodrö Thaye

**Two New Sections, A Yogi, More With Jigme Rinpoche**

January 24th



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

The afternoon started with the appearance of an old Hindu yogi waiting to greet His Eminence near the door to the shrine room. I could only see him from a distance. He was a small man wearing a thick red shirt, yellow lungi, and carrying a tin beggar's cup. His dark hair was bound into a thick round topknot on top of his head. One or two old rosaries hung from his neck. His eyes were both soft and sharp. His forehead was marked with a white and red *tika*, a mark of daily ritual practice. There are many serious spiritual practitioners like him wandering the cities, towns, and remote regions of India. Some of them are quite formidable, wear no clothes, and have dreadlocks that have grown from head to foot. Some wear the garments of one or another sect or austerity. Many of them are men, but some are women. Some of these yogis and yoginis have great spiritual power.

We quickly finished the Black Hayagriva empowerments in first part of the afternoon, and moved to the empowerments for the third Logos, those of enlightened mind. The siddha who transmitted these practices to Padmasambhava was named Humkara. The third Logos has a peaceful aspect, Vajrasattva, and a wrathful aspect, Vajra Heruka, also known as Yangdak, which Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche translated as 'completely pure'. This Logos also includes practices for the wrathful aspect of bodhisattva Vajrapani. Manjushri, Avalokiteshvara, and Vajrapani are known as the lords, or protectors, of the three families and represent the wisdom, compassion, and power of the Buddha respectively.

The Vajrasattva empowerments were brief; there were just two of them. As far as we could tell, there were nine Vajrasattva empowerments in the Rinchen Terdzö. There were also

specific instructions for Vajrasattva practice given as part of the reading transmission of oral instructions that was given during the tantra section. After the two peaceful empowerments we moved to the wrathful section, the empowerments of Yangdak.

During an interview earlier in the week I asked Jigme Rinpoche about Vajrasattva's place in the scheme of things. I wondered about the relationship between Vajrasattva and the sadhanas of the hundred peaceful and wrathful deities presented in the tantra section. Vajrasattva is sometimes referred to as the lord of all the families, meaning all the families of the buddhas. In the following section of the interview, Jigme Rinpoche describes how the practitioner sees the mandala, and how the practitioner sees the world informed by the experience of meditation.

Walker Blaine: The mahayoga sadhana section starts with Vajrasattva and the peaceful and wrathful deities (Shitro), but the Eight Logos come later. I wonder if there is a relationship between Vajrasattva and the peaceful and wrathful deities, and why everything isn't categorized within the Eight Logos.

Jigme Rinpoche: The basic concept of the mandala is such that it depends on where you look. It depends on how you look at it, depending on your understanding, your level of development and capacity of mind, your level of direct perception, your level of experiences in past lives.

Each individual has a different way of seeing the mandala. One person looks at the mandala and sees the details: the complicated, intricate, enormous world of colors, magic, energies, forms, which are also completely filled with vast space. Someone else may look at the mandala and have the skill or technique to view it as just five different groups, the five buddha fields, or five buddha energies.

The first one is seeing the multitude, hundreds or thousands, as vast as the sky, bright, energetic, beautiful, colorful. And he may be completely absorbed into that, which is fine. But there comes a point when it needs to be brought together, because the point is not to get lost in infinite possibilities. So, someone else might see it as an expression of just five basic energies, and another might see it as an expression of just one central character.

WB: Like Vajrasattva?

JR: Yes, Vajrasattva. There is nothing more than the expression of the central figure, and if you miss that key point, you miss the whole point. That is the basic concept of tantric buddhas having less elaborate forms such as five buddha families,

and then more elaborated forms that spread out into hundreds, thousands. And then when completely simplified as just one, it's Vajrasattva. *Rig chig* means one buddha family where every buddha family is united. *Dorje Sempa*, Vajrasattva.

### Contemplative Excitement

Here is a photo of a blessing in action last week. The recipient is Mike Schaeffer, a member of the North American sangha of His Eminence and Jigme Rinpoche. Mike was in the middle of making offerings to the teachers, monastics, and lay people during the afternoon tea when I took the photographs. Mike is a very dedicated student. During the three weeks following his initial stay at the monastery, Mike commuted between the empowerments



Photograph by Walker Blaine

and a job in Hyderabad in order to attend the abhishekas during the weekends. The commute required a grueling 8 to 12 hours of continuous travel each way. Those of you who've travelled in India know the solid dedication that is required to do something like this.

At breakfast Saturday morning, after arriving late in the night during one of his commutes, Mike asked a few of us what was new. Since Mike knew what it was like to be here firsthand (the same thing every day for the most part), and since the rest of us knew Mike, we all sat silently for some time. Finally, one of us piped up and said, "Well, there was that black butterfly that came in the shrine room when we started the black Hayagriva empowerments." This created a burst of animated recollections before we all broke into laughter.

### Yagdak Unseen

January 25th

The young monk antics continue. Before every empowerment we all make a short mandala offering of the universe to the teacher. This kind of offering helps open the mind and heart to the blessings of the lineage. The mandala offering is made by placing a pinch of rice in our palms before making a stationary *mudra*, or gesture, by interlocking our fingers to represent the world according to an early Buddhist cosmology—a central mountain with four continents surrounding it. We chant four lines of verse describing offering the purity of this world so that all beings may enjoy such an experience.

Then, we gently toss the rice up in the air. Usually. Sometimes it's fun to let the rice to fall

on a friend, but this afternoon my row of Westerners was pelted with a weighty spray of about a cup of rice from behind, particularly me. It was an almost comical amount. It hit the back of my head with the weight of a small lemon. Our row sat motionless so as not to arouse a burst of giggles from whatever young monastic perpetrators sat behind us. After a long minute, I slowly and casually turned my head to look back. Amidst a group of eight or nine year old monks sat the ringer, a little monk who ordinarily sits in the second row with some of the lamas. My suspicion is that he is a reincarnate lama. His good humor, maturity, and energy seem almost unnatural for a five year old and the lamas keep a special eye on him. He was staring straight at me, laughing, and the older boys were patting his back in congratulations. A moment later I turned around again, but he was already gone, back in his place near the front of the shrine room.

Today we received nearly half the Yangdak empowerments. Yangdak, the wrathful manifestation of the mind of enlightenment, is another deity whose image was not among the frescos in the shrine room. Since we have no picture, I thought it would be good to present Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's descriptions of Yangdak from two of his books. The first quote is from the upcoming publication, *Root Text Project Volume III: Vajrayana. The Root Text Project* is a compilation of Trungpa Rinpoche's seminary teachings given between 1973 and 1986.

For those to whom Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's vajrayana materials may be new, we'll start with a short quote from Jigme Rinpoche. He addresses the relationship between Trungpa Rinpoche's style of teaching and the traditional presentation of the vajrayana dharma:

I do believe that Trungpa Rinpoche's particular use of language is geared to a small Western audience during a particular time, an audience that did not have a traditional path or a culture built around it with vivid physical details about all the yidams [meditation deities]. He made the Western audience understand the mandalas more on psychological terms. It is unusual to present the development of the different yidams on a psychological level instead of placing more emphasis on a vivid presentation in the physical world. His presentation is more directed to the mind.

I think what we get here in the East is still very much based on tradition, based on what is outer. Of course, the highest practitioners eventually relate to the mind level of what's being manifested. But to a very ordinary practitioner, a real, vivid, living world is presented physically in terms of the colors and forms [in the mandalas, paintings, and so on]. There is a certain connection being built to a physical world of the yidam. There are a lot of steps involved, a lot of descriptions of what the yidam looks like and all that, very vividly and colorfully done, like the physical manifestation of a solid world. Trungpa Rinpoche was painting more from

psychological point. It's easier for a Western audience to click that way.

I think there is a good way of combining the two. It's like saying, 'Here is what is eventually your mind's manifestation, what it looks like. But until then, the real world is like this.'

Here is the excerpt from the *Root Text Project Volume III: Vajrayana*. In it, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche talks about the charnel ground, taking delight in that situation. A charnel ground is the place where, in ancient times, people were brought to die. Some charnel grounds still exist in India and Tibet as cremation grounds. Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche said that the modern equivalent was a hospital.

More broadly speaking, the charnel ground is the meeting ground between life and death, between samsara and nirvana, order and chaos. It is where birth and death occur. From this perspective, the charnel ground is not a foreign place because the environment of birth and death, order and chaos is happening around us all the time. Our experience continually manifests these qualities in one way or another. The wrathful yidams are visualized as living in this kind of environment. Chögyam Trungpa explains:

The first Logos is called Yangdak, which means completely pure, and is connected with the eastern section of the mandala. Yangdak is blue in color and is connected with the vajra family. The philosophy behind this Logos is that of holding the Buddha in your hand. The idea is that Buddha, or any kind of notion of enlightenment, is not a big deal. Looking back from the enlightenment point of view you see that the notion of attaining enlightenment is very small thinking. You can actually see beyond that. Yangdak is connected with the idea of taking delight in the charnel ground as the most luxurious place of all. So with Yangdak we have the idea of holding the Buddha in your hand and the idea of taking delight in the charnel ground of phenomenal experience.<sup>7</sup>

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche also describes Yangdak in *The Lion's Roar: An Introduction to Tantra*, a book drawn from his early public talks on the nine yantras, the nine stages of the path according to the dzogchen system. He writes:

...The symbol of this heruka is a skull cup filled with oil with nine wicks in it. This acknowledges the mirrorlike wisdom of the vajra family, which is also connected with

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<sup>7</sup> This material has been compiled and excerpted by Judy Lief from the *Root Text Project Volume III: Vajrayana*. It is intended for a one-time limited use only, by the Walker Blaine blog on the Rinchen Terdzö Abhisheka. Sources: 1973/1975 Vajradhatu Seminary Transcripts. © 2010 Diana J. Mukpo

the east. In this case the purity and cleanness of vajra is not manifested as a peaceful deity, by no means. He is a wrathful one. This heruka's scepter is a round dagger, like a big pin with a spearhead. An ordinary dagger is flat and has one edge, but this is like a big pin that pierces any conceptual beliefs. The Tibetan name for that heruka is Yangdak. *Yang* means "once more" or "again." *Dak* means pure. Once more, having already been through the hang-ups of the previous yanas, you have now reached the first exit toward the real meaning of freedom, toward the open air, direct toward outer space. pp. 196-197

## Arts And Entertainment

January 25th

This evening we enjoyed a shadow play produced by European Ripa Sangha members Carlo Tomassi and Ursula Von Vacano. Preparations for this production have been underway for many weeks, with a troupe of monks in rehearsal during the morning reading transmissions. A shadow play, in case you have not seen one, is performed on a white screen with bright lights shining behind it. Thin sticks are used to move black paper cutouts of silhouetted figures across the screen. The figures can be made bigger and smaller depending on their distance between the lights and the screen. A shadow play is accompanied by narration, music, and sound effects.



Shadow Players  
Photographer unknown

Because it was Sunday, a large number of Tibetans from the different camps were able to attend the nighttime performance after the empowerments. Sundays always drew larger crowds to the empowerments in addition to the influx of tourists. During the afternoon break today, I was surrounded by a large group of Indians and asked to pose in five or six photographs.

The screen for the shadow play was constructed on one end of the huge monastery courtyard, at the foot of the stairs to the main shrine room. The ten foot wide and three foot high screen was raised six feet above the ground so everyone could easily see it. The frame for the screen was constructed with thick bamboo posts and beams that were hidden behind a colorful array of wool and polyester blankets. Ten small Tibetan prayer flags were strung across the top of the framing. The ground seating beneath the screen was quickly filled by young monks and lay children. Behind them were several rows of chairs set out for His





Photograph by Ursula Von Vacano

Eminence, the Sakyong, the other teachers, the Ripa family, and the other dignitaries. Behind the chairs was ample space for row after row of onlookers. I would say that more than a thousand people were waiting under the dark new moon and bright stars when all was ready to begin.

The evening's feature was titled *The Life of the Buddha*, and told the story of his birth, youth, enlightenment, and first teachings. Carlo and Ursula produced a similar

production of this story in France last year and received mainstream critical acclaim. The Orissa production was less elaborate than in Europe; every bit of the production was created in India from scratch. The blend of art, imagination, and delight in the project was truly uplifting. Local musicians provided the accompaniment and sound effects with voice, Tibetan and Western guitars, drums, and hauntingly beautiful Tibetan flute melodies.

The story began with the birth of Siddhartha Gautama, the prince who was to become Shakyamuni Buddha. I thought the story would be in Tibetan, but to my surprise, the monk-narrators read the description of each scene first in English, then in Tibetan before the curtain was parted and the action began. The Buddha's birth was complete with the infant Gautama taking his first seven steps on miraculously blooming lotuses. A bell chimed with each step, and after taking those first steps, Gautama walked back to his mother, Queen Maya, on the lotuses and leapt back into her arms.

The Western entertainment industry spends millions of dollars on special effects to produce many things that can easily be portrayed with shadows and light. For example, the miracle of walking on water was featured during a scene of the Buddha's early training before his enlightenment. The Buddha would sink into the water and then rise up again as he perfected his yogic powers. Gradually he became more accomplished and finally could walk on the water with ease. Another spectacular effect came at the Buddha's defeat of Mara, the personification of ego. The Buddha touched the earth to indicate that the earth was a witness to his awakening and we saw and heard a gentle earthquake trembling the scene before us.

Humor and action were abundant. While still a prince, Siddhartha trained in the martial and courtly arts. After seeing him relaxing in the palace, we watched a stunning sword fight between Siddhartha and his jealous cousin, Devadata. When the two contestants became fatigued, they would stop fighting for a moment and pant for breath. During the horse race (in



an obvious thematic nod to the Gesar epic, thought this reviewer) one horse fell behind, lost its rider, and finally had to be carried over the finish line.

The fantastic, stupendous performance had the entire audience totally rapt. Indeed, some of youngest viewers were quieter than during the empowerments. After the Buddha gave his first teachings in Sarnath with the wheel of dharma actually turning in the sky, a monastery rose up on screen, Rigon Thupten Mindrolling! The Tibetan name appeared in the sky above the monastery too. Above it all floated the crown of Padmasambhava. The dharma continues to this day, 2600 years of teachings for the benefit of beings.

## Changing Scenes

January 26th

Lhunpo Rinpoche returned to the empowerments today after being sick for two weeks with the chicken pox. I'd hoped that the initial estimates had been right about his recovery taking only a few days, and I am sorry for not letting you know sooner. The Sakyong Wangmo was also ill for a few days last week due to a food allergy. Everyone was happy to see them return to the stage during the empowerments. The space beside His Eminence's throne quickly regained its usual shoulder-bumping bustle. The reading transmissions were scheduled to resume in a couple of days.

Carlo Tomassi and Ursula Von Vacano's website [[www.theatre-tangente-varadar.com](http://www.theatre-tangente-varadar.com)] will give a sense of their theater company. *The Life of the Buddha* will be performed to the local Indian community in their own dialect in the near future. The shadow play was one of the most wonderful, modern yet ancient presentations of dharma I've seen in a long time. It has already been presented in France and Cambodia, and I hope that it will be brought to many other places. The monastery plans to continue the tradition on its own in the future.

We ended a little early today after concluding the empowerment section devoted to wrathful Vajrapani. Often we've set foot in a new section before closing for the day, but it seems that the Amrita section, the fourth Logos, has five interconnected empowerments making a lengthy start. Patricia just had a four-day streak of catching empowerments that the monastery had missed on their list. This may sound impressive, but one must note that His Eminence was the person who caught everything. Almost every day he seemed to discover sections of text that everyone, except maybe some of the chöpons, have missed.

Every day we saw the signs of the end of eastern India's winter. Cold showers in the morning became less irritating, and the chilly stone floors in the guesthouse became soothing to walk on barefoot, even late at night. More people started wearing hats or draping shawls over their heads in the sun, even during the short walks to the monastery. I could not help but

wonder how hot it would get in the coming month or more that remained.

## A Kingly Master And A Medical Connection

January 27th

Guru Chökyi Wangchuk (1212-1271) was the second of the Five Kingly Tertöns, the tertöns who were direct reincarnations of King Trisong Detsen. Guru Chökyi Wangchuk, also known as Guru Chowang (a compression of the first and third syllables of his name), has numerous termas in the Rinchen Terdzö. This may be related to him being a speech manifestation of King Trisong Detsen. He was very prolific. His last appearance in the empowerments was three days ago as the discoverer of a wrathful Vajrapani practice called *The Lion's Roar*.

Guru Chowang received his name at birth, which is sort of unusual because Tibetans are given many names in life and it is often a later one that sticks. At the time of Guru Chowang's birth, his father, a highly accomplished practitioner named Pangtong Drubpay Nyingpa, was writing out a golden lettered copy of the famous tantra, the *Manjushri-nama-samgiti*, which is known in English as *Chanting The Names Of Manjushri*. He had just copied the words, "You are the lord of the dharma and the king of the dharma," when the birth began. Accordingly, the child was named Lord of Dharma, Chökyi Wangchuk. Guru Chowang learned to read and write by the age of four.

Before he reached his teens, Guru Chowang was extremely well practiced and had learned the usual Buddhist sutric and tantric studies along with a diverse range of other topics including Sanskrit, medicine, Bön, and divination. When he practiced Vajrapani at the age of ten, the water in one of the ritual vases spontaneously boiled. At the age of 14, he was given an inventory of the termas—and more importantly, the undiscovered termas—that belonged to the second major tertön in Tibet, Trapa Ngonshe. Trapa Ngonshe is very revered because he discovered four root tantras of Tibetan medicine. These texts continue to be the basis for Tibetan medical practice. They were translated from Sanskrit by Trapa Ngonshe's previous incarnation, Vairochana, and then hidden in Samye monastery where Trapa Ngonshe studied. He lived about two hundred years before Guru Chowang.

The terma inventory that came to Guru Chowang was written on a yellow scroll, a common medium for termas. Because some of the termas on it had not been discovered, various charlatans had attempted to read the scroll. However, their attempts to recover the termas had lead only to unexpected death or some huge misfortune. This gave the terma scroll the reputation of being cursed. After Guru Chowang acquired the scroll, his yogi-father stole and hid it to protect his son from an untimely demise. But about nine years later, at the age of 22, Guru Chowang recovered the scroll and found another related terma inventory of Trapa Ngonshe's in a valley in Southern Tibet.

At that point Guru Chowang began recovering a huge number of termas, 19 major collections in all. Termas have powerful protective deities guarding them and this is probably one reason why the terma scroll, a guide to a large number of different termas, was inaccessible to people not meant reveal Trapa Ngonshe's termas. When retrieving the termas, Guru Chowang sometimes commanded the deities to give the termas to people other than himself. He would send his representatives the locations of the termas, and they'd bring the termas back to him. At other times he'd recover termas himself and miraculous things would be witnessed by those with him. All of this made Guru Chowang's discoveries indisputable.



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

Guru Chowang could manifest his body in six forms simultaneously, leave his hand and footprints in rock, and even fly through the air. He was able to recall thirteen successive previous lifetimes, from King Trisong Detsen up to his life as Nyangral Nyima Öser, the first of the Five Kingly Tertöns. He passed away at the age of 59 amidst wondrous signs. In his day, practitioners would pass each other on the road and ask of each other if they practiced Guru Chowang's earlier or later terma collections. His closest disciple was not Tibetan, but a Nepalese yogi named Bharo Tsukdzin.

Today we entered the first of two days of empowerments for the fourth Logos, Amrita. The Indian teacher Vimalamitra transmitted these practices to Padmasambhava. Amrita, is usually called *Dütsi Yönten* (amrita qualities) in Tibetan. 'Qualities' refers to the fact that the Logos is associated with the enlightened qualities of all the buddhas. This Logos is associated with the deity Chemchok who stands in the center of the mandala as the chief of Eight Logos. A form of Chemchok is also one of the central figures in the practice of the peaceful and wrathful deities of the bardo.

The fourth Logos has a lot to do with medicine, although most empowerments involve receiving medicine in one form or another. Basically speaking, any empowerment is medicine because the dharma is the medicine that cures all ills. However, the empowerments for Chemchok were over the top in the medical arena. They all involved receiving and eating a wide variety of herbal medicines. The practice instructions too had an emphasis on making medicine along with providing instructions for ascetic practices that involved eating medicinal pills and nothing else.

In a fresco in the shrine room, Chemchok is very wrathful, in union with a consort, and

holding a vajra in each of his three right hands and a skull cup of amrita in his three left hands. I asked Lama Tenzin, the head chöpon, if this was the right deity, and he said this was the Chemchok from the Shitro sadhanas. He added that the one in the Amrita section of Eight Logos has 21 heads and 42 arms.

Today there was a luncheon for Shambhala students at the Ripa Ladrang. It was the main event of the day besides the empowerments. About twelve of us arrived at the compound shortly before noon and found the kusung busily setting up plastic tables in the yard behind the house. The luncheon guests included Mathias and Elke Heidel from Germany. They arrived in Orissa about ten days ago and were set depart tomorrow after the abhishekas.

The luncheon menu featured tasty Indian dishes, dhal, rice, and momos. The Tibetans attending the luncheon included the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo, Jigme Rinpoche, Khandro Chime, and the other three daughters in the Ripa family, Semo Palmo, Semo Pede, and Semo Sonam. Conversation at the luncheon was light, the sun was hot, and the eggplant in yogurt sauce was especially good.

### Notes On Three Herukas

January 28th

Here are some remarks that Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche made about the fourth Logos, Amrita in *Root Text Project Volume III: Vajrayana*. Amrita is also the name for consecrated liquor. In this sense, it is something poisonous that has been turned into medicine, although really this is something that must happen in the mind. Amrita came fifth is his presentation:

In the fifth Logos, the basic idea is to intoxicate hesitations by providing greater medicine, greater amrita than hesitation. The phenomenal world and its container, which is mind, can be intoxicated completely. Neurosis can be intoxicated into wisdom; rightness and wrongness can be intoxicated into nothingness; and all six realms can be intoxicated into the mandala of the five buddha families.<sup>8</sup>

When speaking of 'rightness and wrongness' being intoxicated into nothingness, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche is talking about our ideas of being right or wrong about something being intoxicated or transformed by going beyond our habitual patterns. He is not talking about abandoning our fundamental sanity or abandoning benefiting others. Instead, one is intoxicated by wisdom, which in turn brings greater sanity and greater benefit.

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<sup>8</sup> This material has been compiled and excerpted by Judy Lief from the *Root Text Project Volume III: Vajrayana*. It is intended for a one-time limited use only, by the Walker Blaine blog on the Rinchen Terdzö Abhisheka. Sources: 1973/1975 Vajradhatu Seminary Transcripts. © 2010 Diana J. Mukpo

During an interview this evening, Jigme Rinpoche spoke more about the third Logos, Yangdak, and the fifth one, Vajrakilaya, enlightened action, one of the most popular yidam practices in the Nyingma. Jigme Rinpoche recounted the story of Padmasambhava's retreat at the Asura Cave in Parpeng, Nepal. The hills around the Asura Cave are now home to many retreat centers including the new Ripa monastery, Ripa Tashi Choeling. I visited the Asura Cave many years ago. It has a nunnery adjacent to it on the hillside. The cave is small and has a powerful, weighty feeling inside of it. One feels impervious. Outside the cave, on the rock face at the entrance, is an imprint of Padmasambhava's hand.

When Padmasambhava was at Parpeng practicing in the cave, he became accomplished in Yangdak, but he recognized that the Vajrakilaya practice had to be done in conjunction with it. The practice of Yangdak lays the foundation of peace and happiness, but obstacles around that foundation must be overcome in order to give stability to that peace and happiness. At the time of Padmasambhava's retreat there was a huge epidemic in nearby Kathmandu. When Padmasambhava engaged in Vajrakilaya practice the epidemic quickly ended. This experience showed Padmasambhava that Vajrakilaya and Yangdak could be brought together. Therefore he wrote a practice called *Yangphur Dharma, The Combined Yangdak-Kilaya*. Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, Jamgön Kongtrül's guru and friend, discovered the terma for this combination practice. It is included in the Yangdak section of the Rinchen Terdzö.

A few weeks ago, Kristine McCutcheon and Jinpa from Gampo Abbey started a list of ritual objects to acquire for whatever empowerments or practices that might come to Shambhala in the future. Given the variety of implements we saw during the empowerments and in the chöpon's room at the monastery, the list was going to be huge. This afternoon, Kristine and Jinpa exchanged a knowing glance at the appearance of a new, never-before-seen type of vase during one of the empowerments.

## Starting Vajrakilaya, Another Rinchen Terdzö Website

January 29th

This morning a friend stopped by our room to tell us that a long train of monks was carrying the thick, cloth-covered volumes of the Kangyur from the library in the old monastery to the library in the new one. The Kangyur is one of the two most important collections of the texts housed in Tibetan monasteries. There is also a copy of the Kangyur in the main shrine room of the Boulder Shambhala Center. The Kangyur consists of the Tibetan translations of the Buddha's spoken teachings on sutra and tantra. There are many editions of the Kangyur originating from Tibet. There are 104 or 108 volumes in the Kangyur depending on the edition. The edition in Orissa was one of the few carried out of Tibet in the late 1950's and is the last remaining edition of its type. The other major collection housed in Tibetan monasteries is the companion to the Kangyur, called the Tengyur. The Tengyur is 218 or 224 volumes long and is



Photograph by Walker Blaine

devoted to works not spoken by the Buddha himself. It mainly contains abhidharma literature and the early original commentaries and treatises on the sutras and tantras.

Today His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche began the empowerments of Vajrakilaya, the fifth Logos, the embodiment of enlightened activity. This Logos was taught to Padmasambhava by

the Indian siddha, Prabhahasti. Unlike the four previous Logos, Vajrakilaya has no peaceful manifestation. Vajrasattva is sometimes presented as the peaceful manifestation of Vajrakilaya, but is more generally known to the peaceful manifestation of the mind aspect of enlightenment, which is part of the third Logos.

In all forms of Vajrakilaya, the deity holds a three-sided dagger called a *kila* between his palms. The kila's point faces downwards. The symbolism of the kila (Tib. *phurba*, pronounced 'pur-ba') is that the dagger of awareness cuts through passion, aggression, and ignorance simultaneously. These three emotions are called the three poisons. They are the source of our suffering and of all the problems of the world. The phurba is a symbol of Vajrakilaya, and is also one of many implements that may be held by wrathful deities.

The Vajrakilaya practice best known in Shambhala is the *Netik Phurba*, the *Heart Essence Kilaya* terma discovered by Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo in the 19th century. His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche first bestowed this empowerment on the community in 1987. In more recent years, Shechen Rabjam Rinpoche and Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche have bestowed the empowerment in Shambhala. Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche bestowed the Netik Phurba empowerment for the first time about six months after returning to the West from the Rinchen Terdzö. I suspect he had waited to receive the Vidyadhara's lineage of the practice from Namkha Drimed Rinpoche before bestowing the empowerment himself.

The Netik Phurba was 12th in the series of 15 Vajrakilaya empowerments in the Rinchen Terdzö. Sometimes it is hard to believe there are so many variations of the practices. However, each terma lineage represents the unique vision of its tertön. It's interesting to note that Padmasambhava studied the Vajrakilaya tantra 18 times after the retreat at Parpeng in Nepal. Even though he had realized the practice during his retreat and was able to quell an epidemic, he still wanted to discover more.

Today His Eminence again impressed me as I watched him on the throne. Sometimes I get weepy because he is so totally dedicated to making this transmission possible for the Sakyong and the rest of us. He is joyful, and clear. He never seems to be phased by the ritual. He is gentle, kind, and quick to help the chöpons if they miss a beat during the ever-changing procession of terms and traditions. The moments when His Eminence demonstrated silent meditation during the empowerments were among the highlights of my time in India.

Below is the address for the Rinchen Terdzö that was bestowed by Kyabje Taklung Tsetrul Rinpoche at Mindrolling Monastery in Dehradun, North India. In fulfillment of the wishes of her father and root guru, the late Kyabje Mindrolling Trichen, Jetsün Khandro Rinpoche sponsored the event. The website is beautifully put together, has a wealth on information on the empowerments, and many, many photos. The event itself was several times the size of the empowerments Orissa and it all went perfectly. May all beings realize the purpose and meaning of the Rinchen Terdzö.

[\[http://mindrolling.org/RinchenTerdzod/index.cfm\]](http://mindrolling.org/RinchenTerdzod/index.cfm)

## Reasons To Connect

January 29th

[The following article was written to encourage people to sponsor the Rinchen Terdzö. The language has been kept in the present tense to give a better flavor of the moment.]

The Sakyong created an interesting context for the Rinchen Terdzö when he invited the sangha at large to help sponsor the events in Orissa. It would have been easier for him to ask a few major donors to fill out the offering that he and the Sakyong Wangmo, along with Shambhala International, had pledged toward the Rinchen Terdzö. The event would have been paid for, so to speak, before Rinpoche and the Sakyong Wangmo left for India. But instead the Sakyong chose a different route.

I see many interwoven reasons to make a personal, material connection with the Rinchen Terdzö. Offering the possibility of a personal connection is part of why the Sakyong wanted as many people as possible to help support the event. In Asia, Hindus and Buddhists alike will go to a temple and make offerings without a second thought in order to link themselves with whatever goodness is going on there. Often it is just a few rupees, hardly anything. It is a generally accepted truth that a personal connection with virtue will produce something positive within us while simultaneously doing something of value in the world. Even a small offering can have a big effect.

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche taught that the realization of Shambhala would be collective, not individual. We collectively realize enlightened society as a world for others to enter as we





Photograph by Walker Blaine

develop wisdom, love, generosity, and other virtues in ourselves. This being the case, the Sakyong left the gates open for as many people as possible to enter into a relationship with the Rinchen Terdzö and to help raise Padmasambhava's banner of victory in Orissa. The intention is that this banner will be unfurled again and again by present and future Sakyongs of Shambhala for the benefit of the earth, the teachings, and all sentient beings.

As should be clear by now, the Rinchen Terdzö is not a collection of every terma ever discovered. It is made up of the most vital

termas that were on the verge of extinction in Jamgön Kongtrül's day, and the major terma lineages that were well known and effective in bringing about realization. While the Rinchen Terdzö presents the essential practices from the major terma lineages that have survived to the present era, the practice traditions of these termas are held in their most complete forms by their respective lineages and lineage holders. Other terma lineages are not included in the collection. For example, several of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's surviving terma cycles are still maintained in Tibet, but none of them are found in the Rinchen Terdzö. Very little of Taksham Nuden Dorje's 20 volumes of termas are included in the collection either.

However, the Rinchen Terdzö is a special collection. It is held and sustained by many individual lineage holders, particularly within the Kagyü and Nyingma schools. Jamgön Kongtrül and Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo's foresight in preserving the heart termas of Tibetan Buddhism just prior to a period of decline and destruction in Tibet was nothing short of miraculous. The empowerments and teachings in the Rinchen Terdzö maintain the ancient terma lineages, which are like the roots of the tree planted by Padmasambhava, Yeshe Tsogyal, and the other teachers who hid the terma teachings. The Rinchen Terdzö also maintains the power of the popular traditions, like the Könchok Chidu and Longchen Nyingtik, and in this way it invigorates the sap running through the tree. Finally, the Rinchen Terdzö enables people to glimpse the many branches, leaves, and fruits of the individual traditions. The collection offers a great harvest of benefit whereby the students can connect with all that has blossomed through the activity of a thousand years of tertöns. By connecting with the Rinchen Terdzö, we nurture the roots and blood of both our own family lineages and those of countless other traditions.



For students of the Sakyong and his father, the crowning jewel of the termas, the young fruit ripening in the sun, is the Shambhala terma. Connecting with the Rinchen Terdzö strengthens both the ground out of which the Shambhala teachings have grown, and the ground of the vajrayana dharma. The vajrayana was preserved in Tibet after its disappearance in India due to the kindness and foresight of Padmasambhava. Initially, Padmasambhava was called to Tibet because no one else had the strength to ensure the teachings would take hold there. For centuries, the terma teachings he planted have continued to revitalize the dharma. Without taking care of the roots, there is no way for a tree to grow. The terma teachings of Tibet provided a context for the Shambhala teachings to arise in this world. The terma tradition of Tibet is both the inheritance and the support for Shambhala.

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche once said that the dharma in the West would not be firmly established for three generations. For a long time I thought this had something to do with the sangha at large, and I tried to figure out which of the older students already had grandchildren. But seeing the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo together in Orissa, and hearing people speculate when they'd have children, the meaning of the Vidyadhara's words became clear. Tertöns often start a family lineage to carry forward what they've done. To empower his lineage further, the Sakyong is gathering whatever he can from his father into himself so that whatever made Trungpa Rinpoche the source of Shambhala will be carried into the next generation with all possible strength and blessings. At the same time, the Sakyong has received the Rinchen Terdzö, a lineage that the Tibetan world sees is essential for him to possess.

By leaving an open gateway for participation, the Sakyong is giving everyone a chance to connect to a major transmission that is important to the Vidyadhara, to the lineage of the Sakyongs of Shambhala, and to the Tibetan Buddhist world at large. It doesn't matter how much is offered. What matters is making a personal connection along with an aspiration for the dharma and all its teachers. In giving a gift, we help support His Eminence, his monastery, and these empowerments. In the bigger picture, we are nurturing the vajrayana, and in particular the terma tradition. By sponsoring the Rinchen Terdzö we strengthen the tree that helped ripen Shambhala and the lineage of Sakyongs, the tree that supports the New Treasures terma lineage of His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche, the tree that is a support for all the terma traditions of Tibet. Whatever we give and whatever part of the tree is closest to our heart, it's best to link our generosity with vast aspirations for peace and harmony in the world.

While I have written this for readers in Shambhala, I am aware that students of His Eminence and Jigme Rinpoche along with people outside of their sanghas are reading this blog. I want to apologize to those of you from 'away' that this entry is written mostly to one group. At the same time, I want to encourage everyone outside Shambhala to make a personal

connection to the Rinchen Terdzö if you feel an interest in helping with what is happening here.

If I had my wish, it would be that as many people as possible could give something, even it was just a cup of tea, to support this event. I feel like we are on a dock pulling a huge ship towards the West, a ship that holds all kinds of amazing teachers, teachings, and traditions. Every one of them provides some kind of support for the teachings of the Buddha to arise now in this world, in this time that so desperately cries for a bigger vision. Please lend a hand and an aspiration to mix our lives with the Rinchen Terdzö, a key part of the journey of Shambhala and Tibetan Buddhism into the modern world.

### The Pure Realms, Vajrakilaya And Good Chanting

January 30th

In describing his visits to Padmasambhava's pure realm, Chogyur Lingpa tells about the many pujas, teachings, practices, and empowerments that are performed there continuously. Reading these stories leave one overwhelmed by the richness of miracles and devotion: realized beings whose bodies are made of light emanate living forms like their own and then gather these back into themselves again, and dances from the great tantric traditions are led by the likes of Taksham Nuden Dorje and the other Nuden Dorjes. While visiting this celestial realm, Chogyur Lingpa met with not only Padmasambhava and Yeshe Tsogyal, but also many of the great masters of India and Tibet.

I started to think of Chogyur Lingpa's descriptions of Padmasambhava's pure realm during the empowerments today. We've been here nearly two months and the abhishekas have continued for eight weeks. It has been like being in a kind of pure realm, even though it has been a simpler one than the place visited by Chogyur Lingpa. Sometimes the richness of color, form, and imagery has been totally overwhelming. At other times I have found myself slipping into moments of deep appreciation for what is being given to us in Orissa. It is a great good fortune that the dharma remains available in this world. It is clear that everyone is getting something quite special planted inside of them during the empowerments. That these teachings exist at all is quite a wonder, and that so many have assembled in this remote place gives me hope for the earth in all its present troubles.

This afternoon we continued with the Vajrakilaya empowerments. The last abhisheka of the day was the *Netik Phurba*. During it, I had a brief, vivid memory of His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche at Karmê Chöling in 1987 when he first bestowed the *Netik Phurba* and the other empowerments important to Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's vision for the future. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche was sitting on his throne at the end of the long white tent performing one of the last rituals. Everyone sat quietly watching him as he held up an icon. At that moment, I

never would have guessed that I would see the same process of lineage and transmission demonstrated again, 23 years later in India.

The foremost yidams practiced by the Nyingma masters of the past were Vajrakilaya and with Yangdak Heruka, the third Logos. Vajrakilaya was the yidam of Padmasambhava. Yangdak Heruka is often equivocated with Chakrasamvara, a popular practice in the Kagyü and other lineages that arose in Tibet after the Nyingma. It is said that many of the greatly accomplished practitioners of India attained realization through the practice of Chakrasamvara. Like Yangdak, Chakrasamvara is related to the mind aspect of all the buddhas.

While the three-edged kila is the symbol of Vajrakilaya, Yangdak's symbol is a single pointed knife, more like a long pin with spearhead. In *The Lion's Roar: An Introduction to Tantra*, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche compares Vajrakilaya's phurba and Yangdak's single-pointed dagger, and shows how their functions reflect the style of each deity:

In the north, number four, is Vajrakilaya. Kilaya means "dagger." The kilaya has one point but three edges. It is like a three-sided pyramid with sharpened corners. This represents the karma buddha family. It has the sense of penetration. The traditional idea of the karma family is purely functionality, the fulfillment of ends, achieving things, but in this case the karma principle has to do purely with penetration. This should not be confused with the intellectual penetration of the vajra family. The karma of family of Vajrakilaya has to do with precision. Whereas vajra is intellectual, still surveying the area, karma is penetrating and accepts no nonsense. p. 198

Several practices in the Rinchen Terdzö are already a part of Shambhala's practice world. At this point the list has grown to include:

- *The Netik Phurba*, which includes sections of other termas.
- *Könchok Chidu*, *Guru Trakpo* and *Simhamukha* (from the Könchok Chidu)
- *Rigdzin Düpa*, *Palchen Düpa* and *Dechen Gyalmo* (from the Longchen Nyingtik)
- *Black Jambhala*
- *The Blazing Jewel Of Sovereignty*, the empowerment used to enthrone a Sakyong

This list would broaden if we included the practice instructions of the various dzogchen empowerments related to the *Vima*, *Vairo*, *Pema*, and *Khandro Nyingtiks*. Both His Holiness Penor Rinpoche and Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso Rinpoche have introduced some or all of these lineages in our community. Those works, along with major works of Lonchenpa and *The Light Of Wisdom* discovered by Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye, are found at the end of the collection along with several other texts that Jamgön Kongtrül thought important to preserve in the

Rinchen Terdzö.

The evening chants were very pleasant last night. We sat beside some teenaged monks who had memorized all the chants. They gave us a big boost in figuring out the chant order. Also, a monastic trio nearby broke into a perfectly harmonized countermelody to the umdze. The chanting in Orissa was usually more of a 'crowd approach' style of harmony, a mismatched abundance of notes wrapped in a stiff cluster around the amplified voice of the umdze. People singing in harmony perked up my ears and warmed my heart.

Mamo

January 31st

After bestowing the three final Vajrakilaya empowerments today, His Eminence gave the three empowerments in the Rinchen Terdzö related to the sixth Logos, *Mamo*. Padmasambhava received the mamo practice from Dhanasamskrita.

The first five of the Eight Logos are practices aimed solely at achieving complete realization. The sixth Logos, Mamo, is a practice that can be focused on achieving complete realization or on more worldly aims. The last two of the Eight Logos focus mostly on worldly aims. The deities in the three final Logos embody transcendent wisdom just like the first five, however their activity or action can be less focused on realization and more on worldly aims. It is important to remember that 'worldly' in this context still falls within the framework of practice and benefiting others. Another way to understand this is to say that the central deity in each of the last three Logos is transcendent, but the retinue deities are in the world rather than beyond it.

Mamo is a word that can mean 'grandmother', and it is also a familiar way to refer to a dakini, which in this case is a powerful, enlightened or worldly, feminine energy or being. Bötong literally means 'sorcerer,' and Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche sometimes titled the sixth Logos as 'mother's curse'. The sense of this could be understood iconographically. The mamos are depicted as wrathful feminine deities with great power over the phenomenal world, able to cause a lot of chaos or create a lot of benefit. In that way they are like sorcerers; upsetting the balance of that energy would be experienced like a curse.

The practices of the last three Logos are less known in the West probably because the dharma's focus is on attaining realization rather than on achieving worldly things. The three final Logos are not often practiced even in the Tibetan world. A brief mamo-style practice is performed periodically in Shambhala. It is done intensively during the last ten days of the year as a way of cleaning up house, so to speak, before starting fresh at the beginning of spring. The idea is that one is respectfully requesting the enlightened and mundane feminine

energy in the world to forgive our mistakes.

Feminine energy, in the context of Shambhala's mamo practice, can be seen in some sense as the spiritual and worldly environment or atmosphere that surrounds and sustains our experience in the context of vajrayana practice. In practices of this type, the meditator reflects on whatever transgressions against genuine practice and decency that have occurred, and then vows not to make those mistakes in the future. The practice is done intensively at the end of the year because it is a time of reckoning, like tax time. In this analogy, economic chaos would be an expression of the wrath of the mamos.

## Shining New Dharma

February 1st



Photograph by Walker Blaine

Six sky blue flagpoles with shining golden tops were recently erected in the monastery courtyard. They adorned the monastery with the international Buddhist flag, the Ripa flag, Orissa's state flag, and the flags of India, Tibet, and Shambhala. It was really nice to see the Shambhala flag flying in India.

Today we continued receiving empowerments for

Simhamukha, the lion headed dakini, a practice related to the sixth Logos, Mamo Bödong. We started these empowerments yesterday, although some of the Simhamukha practices were bestowed during earlier sections of the Rinchen Terdzö, for example the Simhamukha practice of the *Könchok Chidu*. The general atmosphere in the monastery was lively this morning because the reading transmissions resumed after breakfast. During the empowerments this afternoon, a monk was spotted with an English copy of Chögyam Trungpa's book, *Meditation in Action*.

For the westerners, the day began at 7:00 with a talk given by Jigme Rinpoche in the lawn behind the Ripa Ladrang. Jigme Rinpoche announced this yesterday, and those of us who could make it, briskly walked through the morning fog to the compound. Everything was already set up when we arrived. Three rows of plastic chairs for the Westerners were fanned out in front of a teacher's chair and table on the back lawn.

Jigme Rinpoche surprised us by immediately asking if we had questions. I took the opportunity to ask him to say something about the last three Logos. His answer to that question is below. During the talk, Jigme Rinpoche spoke a bit about the five elements, which are earth, water, fire, wind, and space. Tibetan cosmology and Tibetan medicine see the elements and their qualities of solidity, cohesion, warmth, movement, and accommodation, as being the primary building blocks of the phenomenal world. The categories of the five elements are an experiential way to approach our experience of outer objects, the body, and phenomena.

Jigme Rinpoche: The eight mahaherukas [the eight great herukas, the Eight Logos] have two sections. The first five belong to the wisdom deities' section. This means that those first five deities are the means of accomplishment. They are the practices that enable us to accomplish the [five] wisdoms. That section of the empowerments has already happened, with the last one being Vajrakilaya. These five are the representation of the body, speech, mind, quality, and activity of enlightened wisdom.

The remaining three herukas are more like a help, a removing of obstacles on the path to accomplishing the five wisdoms. Those three are called 'worldly' even though the first of the three, Mamo Böton, is semi-worldly. Nevertheless, these three are called the worldly protectors, or worldly practices, because basically they enable the conditions and circumstances through which one can accomplish the practices of the five wisdoms.

Yesterday we began with mamo böton. Mamo means 'feminine world' or 'feminine aspect'. It's a complete section devoted to the feminine deities. It is called 'semi-worldly' because the mandala has two parts, a beyond-worldly part and a worldly part. The first part, the original mamo, is called Mamo Mukhali. Mamo Mukhali is known as the Queen of Space.

When we talk about this, we should understand that there are the three aspects of the feminine quality of appearances. Appearances include both appearing phenomena and non-appearing [intangible] phenomena. The first aspect relates to outer phenomena. Outer phenomena are the solid physical world. This is made from substances and energies that are very tiny and not perceivable. Those non-perceivable energies are called the five elements. The five elements are the basic substances, or ingredients, you might say, the energies that contribute to the formation of the solid physical, tangible world.

Within these five elements, the basic foundation is the element of space. Space

and [the other] four elements are known as feminine energy, feminine in character. From among these five, the mother of all the feminine universe, feminine quality or energy, is the mother of space. That is Mukhali. Mukhali is not considered a worldly energy or a worldly deity. Rather it is seen as the dharmadhatu, [the space of phenomena], the source of all happenings, because it is space. Therefore, this aspect of Mamo Bötong can only be a wisdom entity. But her retinue is all worldly deities. That is why Mamo Bötong is called 'semi-worldly.' There is the boss, which is wisdom, and the retinue, which is worldly.

Due to the five elements coming together, the physical world is created. The emotional world arises due to linking with the physical world. The outer elements have a direct link to the inner elements in our body. The inner elements are the different elementary energies present in our body in a physical form—like heat [fire], breathing [wind], flesh [earth], and so on. These are directly related to the five elements. The five outer elements have a function to maintain, to continue, and to eventually disintegrate the physical world. The inner elementary world is also responsible for giving birth to life, sustaining it, and disintegrating in the end. That is the physical world.

In addition to and depending upon the five outer elements of the physical world and the inner elements of the body, is the subtlest part of the inner entity. This is inner world that is based on the *tsa*, *lung*, and *tigle*. Tsa, lung, and tige [channels, winds, and essence] are the most subtle, highly refined states of the energy. That interacts with the more gross physical, more solid, entities. The more solid entities are our bodies, our sense fields or organs, which then interact with the outer physical world.

As long as there is unity and harmony, a good relationship between these, there is health, there is happiness, bliss, emptiness, and so on. When there is disharmony, disintegration starts, and therefore pain, suffering, destruction, and all sorts of things like that begin. So Mamo Bötong is a practice for restoring, for reconnecting, for stabilizing, for harmonizing the elementary energy of the feminine world. This is basically our outer physical world, the inner body world, and the innermost tsa lung tige world. That is the reason [for Mamo Bötong practice]. Any obstacles leading to that are hopefully reversed or overcome by the practice of Mamo Bötong. It's actually, essentially, a feminine world of outer, inner, and innermost substance.

Then the last two sections are *Jigten Chöto*, or 'worldly offerings and praises,' and *Möpa Dra-Ngak*, or 'wrathful mantras.' These two are worldly. Jigten Chöto relates to the worldly deities that govern the physical realms, the worldly entities that dwell in

the physical realms. They are like what you call the protectors. For example, there are numerous numbers of spirits and caretakers in the oceans, in the mountains; in all kinds of physical realms there are these kinds of spirits. There are kinds of energies that are attracted to those places. Jigten Chöto is mostly about those protectors. They are strictly worldly. They make our path smoother and bring all kinds of positiveness so that our path can proceed speedily, without many hindrances, and so on.

*Möpa Dra-Ngak* has to do with wrathful mantras. Wrathful mantras are mostly directed at overcoming wrathful obstacles, subjugating the wrathful obstacles through the use of tantric rituals. These are practiced by an accomplished yogi on the path. Any actual good tantric yogi can make use of these practices in overcoming wrathful obstacles. Those are the three remaining of the eight herukas that will be given in the next few days.

### Remarks By His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche

February 1st

At the conclusion of today's empowerments, His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche gave the assembly a twenty-minute talk in Tibetan, which Jigme Rinpoche then summarized in English before we began our closing chants. His Eminence began by saying we had received the abhishekas for two months and there were a few important points he wanted to emphasize to us at this time. I started recording fifteen seconds into the summary, at the beginning of three main points His Eminence was to stress: devotion, compassion, and *samaya*.

*Samaya* is a Sanskrit word that refers to the vows taken in the vajrayana. When receiving an empowerment, one first retakes the refuge and bodhisattva vows. The retaking of the refuge vow reaffirms one's commitment to the Buddha, the teachings, and the sangha or community. Then one retakes the bodhisattva vow, the vow to attain enlightenment in order to benefit all beings. Additionally, one takes the vajrayana vows. The main samayas are the samayas of body, speech, and mind, which are explained in Namkha Drimed Rinpoche's talk. *Samaya* is making a commitment to the wisdom and compassion embodied by the teacher, and shown by the teacher to be present within us. In a sense, we vow to remain within our inherent wisdom, within the realization of buddha nature. The path is then to stay within that wisdom. When we can do that continuously, that is the end of the path.

[...First, I would like to make] the point that in this degenerate era when our mindstream is extremely suspicious, extremely restless, complicated, and complex, we do not have enough possibility or enough wisdom to actually develop devotion. Without devotion, the crucial link to accomplishing the deities is missing. Therefore it is highly important to understand that we must cause devotion to arise within us



again and again.

Second is the development of bodhicitta or compassion to all sentient beings. Without compassion, the way or the door to benefiting others is missing. These two points of devotion and compassion are very important. They are crucial factors for every practitioner to understand. At the same time, we really have to know that in this era we have a lot of negative emotions and negative circumstances. When these counter-productive circumstances are strong, we should be putting even more effort and energy into the two important factors of devotion and compassion.

The Rinchen Terdzö is of course very precious. But what makes the Rinchen Terdzö even more precious is the fact that there is a very unique lineage, a living lineage of transmission that I hold. This makes it more important. It gives life, actual life to the empowerment. It doesn't matter whether we are counting the number of empowerments we've received or not. What is important here is the living lineage through which the whole transmission is taking place. That is what makes the whole thing different and precious.

The heart of empowerment is samaya, as I have told you before. Therefore, everyone should try to observe the samayas properly. Out of all the different kinds of samayas the main ones are the three samayas of body, speech, and mind. These three samayas are the binding cord of the teachings. Every manifestation—physical, verbal, mental—is left free from manipulation, free from mental interpretations, and thus one is trained to see in pure vision. The forms one sees are seen as a deity. What one hears is heard as mantra. What one perceives mentally is nothing other than the pure thought, pure energy arising either in the form of devotion or in the form of compassion. These three main factors of samaya are crucial.

At the same time, the negative emotions can be at work every now and then, particularly in our daily life. In our life we often experience negative emotions that are physical, verbal, or mental. To overcome that, while receiving these empowerments when the mind is busy thinking all sorts of negative thoughts and emotions that then break the samayas, I have strongly recommended reciting 100,000 Vajrasattva mantras and 100,000 Guru Rinpoche mantras. This is mainly to help overcome these kinds of obstacles and to prevent impairments of samaya from arising. Then the living transmission of the lineage will uninterruptedly flow into your own being, it becomes uninterrupted. It will flow directly into your own being. Through that we gain wisdom, blessings and accomplishment. And so, in the end, it's my wish to tell all of you not to engage in distractions or in the thoughts that are not

so important, not so wholesome, but rather to develop awareness again and again, whenever you can.

## When's The Next One?

February 2nd



Photograph by Walker Blaine

At dinner tonight, Alexandra Kalinine described a bit of sunset chaos that erupted in the monastery courtyard in the late afternoon. A cow had found its way past the outer gate, through the courtyard, and made it as far as the steps up to the main shrine room doors. A number of young monks tried to chase it out, but the cow proved a worthy adversary, dodging the boys and some monastery dogs quite successfully. Alexandra spotted the cow from the terrace near the door to the second floor public bathroom. She was contemplating going down the steps when she saw the cow below trying to come up.

Today we received all the empowerments of the last two Logos, Worldly Offerings and Praises, which was transmitted to Padmasambhava by Rambuguhya, and Wrathful Mantras, which was transmitted by Shantigarbha. There were about ten empowerments in the last two Logos. They were all brief. These two Logos are only performed by practitioners who have attained accomplishment in one of first five Logos, the transcendent group of practices. The aim of Buddhist practice is to attain realization first and foremost, so it makes sense that the transcendent practices are the focus of the Eight Logos. The last two are rarely done.

For the second day in a row we closed a little early, before seven in the evening. Usually we ended seven-thirty and sometimes after eight. It made me a little sad when we stopped the empowerments while there was still sun outside. Even after five hours of empowerments in a row, if we stop early there's a slight feeling of loss when His Eminence leaves. I had the strangest thought yesterday, I could do this again. I shared this with someone else who said she felt the same way: "When's the next Rinchen Terdzö?"

## Many Dakinis

February 3rd

Jinpa, Shambhala's monastic at the Rinchen Terdzö, has risen further up the ladder in the maroon and yellow world at the monastery. A few weeks ago he played the gyaling at the side of the room as the rinpoches and lamas made their way through the crowd with the empowerment articles in the evening at the conclusion of the empowerments. Today at one o'clock, he played the gyaling as part of the trio of monks who led His Eminence to and from the shrine room. Only ordained monastics can perform this function and they get to wear the dignified yellow hat. Jinpa and the rest of today's procession was top notch.

The conclusion of the Eight Logos empowerments yesterday meant that we had finished a major section of the Rinchen Terdzö, the yidam practices. His Eminence immediately started the empowerments of the next section, called the dakini, the root of activity. The dakini empowerments began with three abhishekas of Vajrayogini, the most famous type of dakini practice. Dakinis are feminine deities. The word dakini can also refer to a woman who manifests enlightened or worldly feminine energy in a powerful or extraordinary way. In tantric literature, it is explained that women are the embodiment of prajna, transcendent knowledge, and that men are the embodiment of upaya, the skillful means of benefitting others.

Several years ago I was on pilgrimage with friends in Tibet, hiking the hills of Samye Chimpu, near Samye, Tibet's first monastery. The brush-covered, winding ridges of Samye Chimpu are pocketed with retreat caves where a great number of termas have been discovered. For example, Jigme Lingpa's famous cycle of termas, the Longchen Nyingtik, was discovered at Samye Chimpu in a cave that is one of the blackest places I have ever 'seen' (when the butter lamps are out). There were many miraculous things to discover at Samye Chimpu, such as Padmasambhava's head-print in rock, and the self-arisen stone dais that manifested beneath King Trisong Detsen's daughter Pemasal when Padmasambhava brought her back to life in order to teach her the Pema Nyingtik before she went on to her next birth.

When we walked down one of the ridges at Samye Chimpu at the end of the afternoon, I thought I spied another cave entrance hidden in the brush. Our interpreter Dorje, a Tibetan from Amdo who'd been with us for a month and with whom we'd become quite close, heard me wondering aloud what lay beyond the path through the bushes. In his early twenties, Dorje was discovering his Buddhist roots and was eager to help us connect in whatever way he could to the dharma. Without warning, he scrambled through the brush to toward the cave and began calling out a greeting before anyone could protest that he might disturb a retreatant. A moment later he emerged from the brush saying that it was a nice cave and he'd met a yogini that we should come meet.

A yogini is a female tantric practitioner; a yogi is a male tantric practitioner. Sometimes these terms are used loosely in the West, but the basic meaning is honorific. A yogini or a yogi is someone who is genuinely practicing yoga, union with the ultimate nature of reality. In classical texts the words refer to people who are realized. The essence of the yogini principle is embodied in the sadhanas of Vajrayogini, the indestructible yogini.

Getting back to the story... When we entered the cave we were introduced to an extraordinarily peaceful and kind nun with a shaven head and a simple shrine beside her. We were a bit shocked to learn that she'd been in retreat there for eleven years. After finding out that it was ok we'd just popped in, a bit of conversation ensued and she offered us tea while we talked.

For me, the quality around this yogini was that nothing extra was happening. She was plainly who she was and there was no detectable neurosis around that. I have experienced this with other people who've spent long periods in retreat. It's like they aren't experiencing discursive thoughts; there's no echo of mental speed in what they say or how they act. The space around people like this feels somehow cleaner and saner than what's generally accepted as normal. I don't know how it came up, but at some point she told us that three different rinpoches had said she was a real dakini and asked her to marry them. With each one she said no, and told them she preferred to remain in retreat. At that point I asked her to tell us what it meant to be a dakini. She replied that it meant your mind was inseparable from Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava.

We stopped the empowerments today part-way through a series of ten related Vajrayogini abhishekas found in the rediscovered termas of Jomo Menmo, a 13th century yogini who was an emanation of Yeshe Tsogyal, Padmasambhava's Tibetan consort. Jomo Menmo's presence in the Rinchen Terdzö was inspiring; female tertöns are rare. Vajrayogini herself gave Jomo Menmo the terma called *The Gathering Of All The Secrets Of The Dakinis* when Jomo Menmo was twelve years old. Jomo Menmo, then a sheepherder, had been awakened from a nap she was taking near the entrance to one of Padmasambhava's caves of attainment, a place where practice could be very strong. Inside the cave, a secret door opened and she joined a feast with Vajrayogini and many other dakinis. Jomo Menmo was told to practice *The Gathering Of All The Secrets Of The Dakinis*, but to keep it secret.

Jomo Menmo was an amazing practitioner with wonderful qualities, but the majority of people where she lived believed she'd been possessed by a mountain spirit, so she took to wandering the country with no fixed destination. This style of practice was not uncommon in Tibet. Later she met Guru Chökyi Wangchuk who understood that she was Yeshe Tsogyal. For a short while she and he were consorts. Guru Chökyi Wangchuk advised her that it was not

the time to reveal *The Gathering Of All The Secrets Of The Dakinis*, so Jomo Menmo continued to wander Tibet accompanied by two accomplished female practitioners. Then, when she was 35, having secretly benefitted many beings, she and her two companions performed a feast on a mountaintop in central Tibet, flew off into the sky like birds, and entered Padmasambhava's pure realm without relinquishing their bodies. Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo rediscovered Jomo Menmo's terma in the 19th century. Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo had been Guru Chökyi Wangchuk at the time of Jomo Menmo.



Mandarava, Padmasambhava's Indian consort  
Photograph by Walker Blaine

The Jomo Menmo empowerments were among the most elaborate and complex we received during the Rinchen Terdzö. As they were bestowed, a large group of dark skinned Indian women appeared at the door near the side of the stage. Their saris were bright solid colors: red, white, blue, yellow, green, and so on. They looked extremely shy. There were tiny girls and tall women, and they stood clustered together in a group. At first none of them even dared to step over the threshold into the shrine room. They seemed awed by His Eminence, and most all of them had their palms pressed together at their hearts. He looked over to the group and gave them several beaming smiles as he continued the empowerments.

## Vajrayogini And Tara

February 4th

The dakini empowerments continued today with the conclusion of Jomo Menmo's Vajrayogini abhishekas and an empowerment of a Vajrayogini yangter from Rigdzin Gökyi Demtruchen. Vajrayogini is 'the anthropomorphic form of shunyata,' as Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche once put it. She is how emptiness might look if one were to actually meet it. As a deity, she is visualized as a dancing, wrathful goddess surrounded by the flames of wisdom. She holds a knife that cuts conceptuality in one hand and a skull cup filled with the amrita in the other.

Vajrayogini practice is special to the Shambhala community because it was the sadhana that Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche taught in the most depth. Many of the students of the Vidyadhara have practiced Vajrayogini intensively at some point. It was poignant to witness such a wide variety of Vajrayogini abhishekas. It continued to be eye opening to see that there were so many ways to present the each of the practices in the collection.

Following the Vajrayogini empowerments we received two empowerments for practices of Tara, *Drölma* in Tibetan. Tara is sometimes translated as, ‘She Who Liberates’. Tara is sometimes described as compassion embodied in a human form. One of her principle expressions of compassion is to liberate beings from fear. The great Indian teacher Nagarjuna wrote a praise to the twenty-one forms of Tara. Most, if not all, of the lineages of Tibetan Buddhism have a wide range of Tara practices. Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche has written a short Tara practice and there is at least one short Tara supplication in the collected Tibetan works of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche.

Tara’s story is relevant to all of us. Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso Rinpoche explains that kalpas ago Tara was born as a virtuous and gifted being with great faith in the dharma and the Buddha of that era. At that time she was a princess named Yeshe Dawa, Moon of Wisdom. She had an enormous ability to practice the dharma and through this had a glimpse of supreme bodhicitta, the heart of enlightenment. At that time, all the ordained monks around urged her to pray that she to be born as a man through the power of her merit so that she could accomplish great benefit for the teachings. The story continues:

This seemed a mistaken understanding to Princess Yeshe Dawa. So, she replied:

“Here, there are no men, there are no women,  
There is no self, no individual, and no perception.  
These labels of ‘male’ and ‘female’ are meaningless,  
They are the utter confusion of weak-minded worldly beings.”  
Thus she taught the equality of all things.

“Many are those who wish to attain enlightenment with a male body,  
But no one wishes to do so with a female body.  
Therefore, with a female form, till samsara is emptied,  
I will vastly accomplish the benefit of beings.” Thus she vowed.<sup>9</sup>

And so Tara has continued to benefit beings to this day in a female form. Tara’s two most popular practices are White Tara and Green Tara. White Tara is known for conferring vitality, healing, and also fertility. In a monastery near Swayambunath Stupa in Kathmandu there is a White Tara statue that has actually spoken on occasion. The statue wears many jeweled necklaces that were given to her by women who’d been unable to conceive until they came and made prayers before her. There is a speaking Tara at the Mahabodhi Stupa in Bodhgaya too. Green Tara is associated with protection and activity. People often practice Green Tara

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<sup>9</sup> Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso Rinpoche composed these two verses in 1997. They are part of his text, *The Origin Of Tara In Brief*, translation by Chryssoula Zerbinì, copyright 2010, Marpa Foundation.

when travelling. The 16th Karmapa practiced Tara when taking off and landing in airplanes.

As for what Tara protects us from, there are lists of 21, 16, and 8 kinds of fears. The eight fears to be protected from are the fears due to lions, wild elephants, fire, snakes, thieves, imprisonment, floods, and demons. Some of these fears are more rare in the modern world than they were in ancient India. However, Orissa is still a place where cobras, tigers, and elephants roam wild, and Shambhala Mountain Center is sometimes host to rattlesnakes, mountain lions, and bears. These eight fears are sometimes connected with eight negative states of mind: pride, delusion, anger, jealousy, wrong views, avarice, desire, and doubt. Tara's vow is that she will manifest to those who sincerely request her help during times of great distress.

## Feast And Good Fortune

February 5th

Shambhala and Padma Ling students again joined together for Padmasambhava feast in the old monastery this evening. Yesterday there was a minor controversy about when the actual feast day was. Several Westerners were adamant it was on the 4th of February. However, the chöpons at the monastery, who very kindly make extra tormas for us on feast days, were firm in their position that today was the day and therefore would not make us a torma on the 4th. So, we did the feast on the 10th lunar day, as it was perceived in Orissa. The lunar calendar is used to reflect the interrelationship between the flow of energies in the body and the movement of outer energies like the sun and the moon.

The Westerns students decided to do a single feast with one of His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche's termas of Padmasambhava rather trying to do two simultaneous feast practices the way we did last month. This suited our international group well because we could sing the liturgy together in Tibetan. At one point, we came to what is known in Shambhala as the *Jigme Lingpa Feast Offering*. This we did three times in Tibetan and then three times in our own languages, all at once—French, Spanish, German, and English. Feast again included arak, the locally brewed hard alcohol, which some of us mixed with orange soda. After the practice, a few well-behaved dogs that sleep in the trees next to the old monastery gobbled up the leftovers.

Earlier in the day I met with the Sakyong. He had been very busy writing during the breaks in the empowerments and this was the first meeting with him in several weeks. The Sakyong was relaxed and happy. He remarked that this event was somewhat historic in that it may have been the first time a Western audience has really been let in at the Rinchen Terdzö. He pointed out that in the early years, Westerners would never be allowed to ask the chöpons questions. To be able to walk into the chöpon's room and ask how to read the abhisheka

outlines, and be able to check over what happened at the end of each day, has been a real blessing. Our own three-year retreatant, Kristine McCutcheon, has made some of the tormas used in the abhishekas, which is another sign of our ability to meet the tradition.

Today we continued with the dakini empowerments. These alternated between different forms of Vajrayogini and Tara. We also received the Taksham terma practice of Yeshe Tsogyal. This empowerment was lengthy and, of course, a special moment for the monastery. Tomorrow we will we start with *Dechen Gyalmo*, the famous dakini practice from the Longchen Nyingtik, which was bestowed by His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche at Karmê Chöling, in Boulder, and in Halifax in 1987.

### Letter From The Sakyong Wangmo

[This letter was sent from the Sakyong Wangmo, Dechen Choying Sangmo to the Shambhala Community during the Rinchen Terdzö.]

February 4th, 2009

Dear Subjects of Shambhala,

Even though I am far away from many of you, you are in my heart. I am constantly thinking of you all and wondering how you are doing.

My husband, the Sakyong, jokes that this is the marathon of abhishekas, and having entered the dakini section, in the third month of the Rinchen Terdzö Empowerment, completing about five hundred abhishekas, I am beginning to agree with him.

The days are passed essentially in group retreat, much like the dathüns in Shambhala. Every day is basically the same, and every evening, with a large gathering of lamas, monastics, and lay people, we all do aspiration prayers dedicated to all sentient beings.

Here in Orissa, we have both the monastic community of monks and nuns, and the lay people attending from the five main Tibetan refugee camps as well as from all over India and the Himalayan region. There are also many adventurous students from Shambhala and Ripa (students of my brother, Jigme Rinpoche, from Europe and the U.S.) It is amazing to see these different cultures gathering together under one mandala, devotedly receiving the abhishekas. This reminds me of what the Buddha said, about how the dharma would gather together all races and all cultures.



I am very moved by how my father, His Eminence, Tertön Namkha Drimed Rinpoche, is taking such care in passing the lineage on to the Sakyong. And I am delighted that there have been fundraising parties and gatherings to support this. For those of you who could not be here, this is a wonderful way to contribute and participate from afar in the Rinchen Terdzö empowerments. I hope that in the future, many of you will be able to come and visit the monastery and see the surrounding community.

I cannot express how meaningful the Rinchen Terdzö is for our community. Many local people see His Eminence putting so much time and effort into this, and they have told me—especially some of the older ones who escaped from Tibet—how fortunate they feel that such a major teaching is taking place. The community members often thank me, saying how grateful they are that the Sakyong requested and is sponsoring this historic event. Everyone is benefiting tremendously whether near or far, and to think, all this is happening because of our marriage! How amazing!

Ki Ki So So!

Yours in the vision of the Great Eastern Sun,

The Sakyong Wangmo, Dechen Choying Sangmo

Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo

February 6th



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

Time has started moving more quickly. Lately everyone has made a speculation about how long the remaining empowerments will take. Some suggested we would finish by Shambhala Day, or Losar as the Tibetans call it, February 25th. Others calculated that it might take a bit longer. However, when all was said and done, the math was all over the place. Nobody really knew, nor did anybody care all that much. Aside from practical concerns like travel plans or fears of excessive heat, it wasn't important how long the Rinchen Terdzö took. The important part was that Namkha Drimed Rinpoche was bestowing the teachings, people were here, and the dharma was being heard and practiced.

Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye didn't create the

Rinchen Terdzö alone. His main inspiration and guide was his guru, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo (1820-1892). In an interview last week, Jigme Rinpoche stressed how crucial Jamyang Khyentse was in the development of the collection. He said:

Jamgön Kongtrül's source of authenticity and approval for the termas was Jamyang Khyentse, Pema Ösel Do Ngag Lingpa [Jamyang Khyentse's tertön name.] He was also Jamgön Kongtrül's teacher. For Jamgön Kongtrül, the only person who could definitely authenticate was Khyentse. Jamgön Kongtrül did more work on the Rinchen Terdzö, but the actual source was Khyentse. This is because so many of the termas teachings included in the Terdzö were almost extinct, and some were actually extinct. Somehow, Do Ngag Lingpa, Khyentse, brought these back to life through his visions of the earlier tertöns.

Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo was born in Derge, eastern Tibet. He was an exceptional rebirth who even as a child had a strong motivation to help others and a desire to become a monastic. In his youth he could recall his previous lives. The presence of the protectors Mahakala and Ekajati seemed to accompany him and, on some occasions, they were actually visible to people with him. He was like many other tertöns described in this blog, a brilliant scholar who was a voracious learner.

From an early age, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo had many visions of teachers and deities. His termas, based on his clear recollections of previous lives, and his pure visions are voluminous. We received empowerments related to his discoveries at least every other day during the Rinchen Terdzö. One reason for the large number of his discoveries was that when he was forty, after being supplicated repeatedly by Jamgön Kongtrül for help in recovering the ancient termas, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo was blessed in an extraordinary way by Padmasambhava during a pure vision. As a result, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo was able to see all the tertöns and terma teachings from the past, from his time, and from the future that would arise in Tibet.

Even with all these accomplishments and the ability to see all tertöns and termas, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo still continued to study impartially with teachers from all lineages, 150 different teachers in total. This led him to study or receive the transmissions of over 700 volumes of teachings. This kind of manifestation is inconceivable from the standpoint of ordinary academic ambition. It absolutely does not make sense that someone of such realization would so diligently continue on the path of study. The only way to understand what Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo did is to see it from the point of view of helping others by gathering, preserving, and spreading the teachings. Khyentse Wangpo said that he'd made no more progress on the realization of mind's nature after receiving a particularly profound set of

teachings at the age of nineteen. This might sound like he is being humble somehow, but it actually shows that he was already completely realized at the start of his brilliant and magnificent life. This is how he accomplished so much.

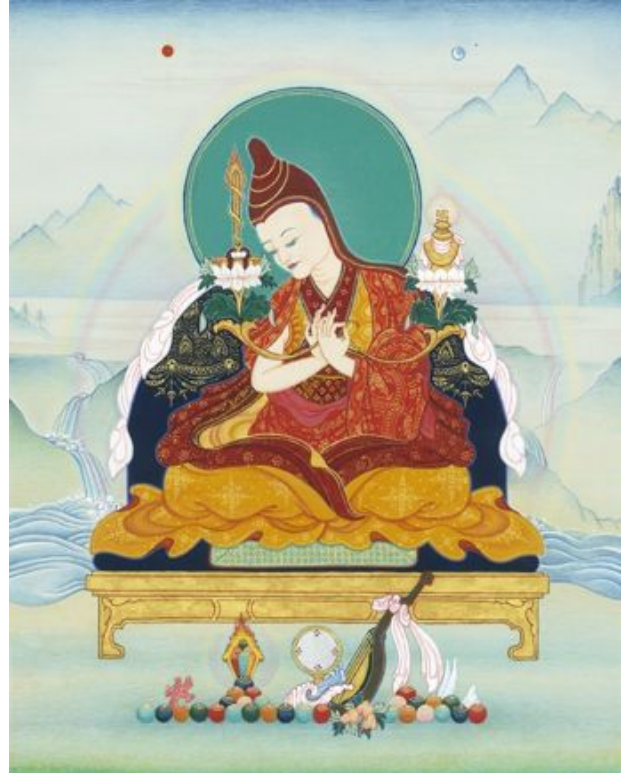
Besides preserving the dharma through teaching, explanations, and practice, Jamyang Khyentse built many libraries, constructed and restored numerous monasteries, and he commissioned a large number of statues as well as many woodblock and handwritten editions of scriptures. Printing was very important in 19th century Tibet, a place with relatively poor means and still using woodcuts for printing texts. Although miracles are not the point, it's both poetic and inspiring that the rice Jamyang Khyentse threw in offering to the principle statue of the Buddha in all Tibet, the Jowo in Lhasa, spontaneously turned into white flowers. Rice tossed in offering is a substitute for flowers.

At the age of 72 Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo passed away. At the time of his passing there were gentle earthquakes and his face was said to be as radiant as that of the moon. His body became as light as cotton. This sign is in an indication of the attainment of rainbow body, the exhaustion of the coarse and subtle defilements and fixations in a great meditator.

### Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye

I am very pleased to present a painting of Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye by Cynthia Moku. She, like Noedup Rongae who was featured earlier in the book, is an artist to the Kalapa Court. Below is her description of the thangka. If you are interested in a print, please email Cynthia at [cm@cmoku.com](mailto:cm@cmoku.com). You can see more of her work at: <http://www.cmoku.com>. Cynthia writes:

In this painting, Jamgön Kongtrül turns to his right and bows his head towards the flaming jewels in front of his seat. With this simple direct gesture, he is exemplifying to us the honor to be given to the Buddha, his teachings, and the community of practitioners, and to the consequent realized masters over time, the personal yidams, the dakinis and dakas, and all the protectors of their mandalas. Kongtrül holds his hands in the



dharmachakra mudra at his heart level. It is the gesture of turning the wheel of dharma thus activating the teachings in our world system.

Two lotus flowers are seats for the purity and liberating capacity of Kongtrül's enlightened qualities, which are symbolized by the flaming sword rising above the *Perfection Of Wisdom*<sup>10</sup> text on his right, and the auspicious vase topped by a symbol of *tendrel chingwa*, the interdependent relationship that is the nature of all phenomena. This symbol—derived from the Sanskrit root *sv-asti*, meaning well-being and good fortune—also indicates prosperity. Turning in a clockwise direction, the reverse swastika symbol is considered the seal of the Buddha's heart, expressing the powerful illuminating radiance that the Enlightened One extends to all, like the rays of the golden sun. The fullness yet emptiness of the gold vase to his left indicates Lodrö Thaye's embodiment as the union of wisdom and compassion. The sun and moon circles in the sky represent the red and white bindus fully mature. This is another visual sign of the inseparability of absolute and relative bodhicitta, which is the vital heart essence of Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye's manifestation.

I painted this image many years ago, while Kyabje Kalu Rinpoche was living in this world. The composition wasn't complete with landscape and a few other details until recently. When Kalu Rinpoche saw the image, he blessed it by writing in his own hand the seed syllables for the three chakras on the back of the work. He mentioned some of the enlightened qualities of the Great Lodrö Thaye as kind and gently refined with great humility. In our lifetime, His Eminence Kyabje Jamgön Kongtrül Rinpoche is considered the mind emanation of Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye, Dzigar Kongtrül Rinpoche is considered the speech emanation, and Kyabje Kalu Rinpoche is recognized as the activity emanation.

Chöd And Machig Labdrön

February 7th

Maggie Smith arrived with Allya and Paul Burke today. Their jeep pulled into the small parking lot in front of the guesthouse at teatime. At that moment, most of the lay people attending the empowerments had also arrived in the parking lot. They were on their way home because the rest of the day's empowerments were restricted. The dusty white four-by-four carrying the new guests had to creep through a crowd of a few hundred Tibetans who were on foot or revving motorcycles in front of the guesthouse. A cow relieved herself in front of the jeep as it finally rolled to a stop. Asked later if the crowd had slowed their arrival,

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<sup>10</sup> Prajnaparamita

Maggie cheerfully replied, “No more than anything else on the way here.”

Today we completed the dakini section of the Rinchen Terdzö, the section devoted to the feminine deities that are the root of enlightened activity. We finished with a flourish of practices for Tara, Vajravarahi, Guhyajñana (Secret Wisdom, a deity mentioned in Jamgön Mipham’s *Great Clouds Of Blessing*), Mandarava, and Yeshe Tsogyal. The very last empowerment in this section was for a *chöd* practice in the Mindroling tradition.

Chöd practice is interesting. Generally speaking, the main part of the chöd practice begins with the ejection of consciousness. One visualizes that one’s consciousness leaves one’s body of flesh and blood through the crown of the head, and one arises in a form of Vajrayogini, the embodiment of wisdom. Then one imagines offering one’s ordinary body, blessed as divine food, to all enlightened beings, all suffering beings, those with whom one has karmic debts, and all spirits and demonic forces who want to do harm to others. This kind of visualization develops insight into emptiness along with strength of compassion, and it helps one to relate more sanely to fear and death.

Sometimes advanced practitioners deliberately practice chöd in frightening places like charnel grounds where corpses are cremated or fed to vultures. The Asian belief is that ghosts lurk in charnel grounds, so practice in such places gives one greater opportunities to work directly with fear and confusion. Ultimately, all appearances in life and death are manifestations of the mind. The idea of a ghost or demon vanishes with the genuine realization of this insight. For the best practitioners, chöd practice in a charnel ground can be a fast track to that realization.

The word chöd means to sever or cut. One cuts one’s idea of there being a self. *Selflessness* is an unfamiliar concept in the greater Western world. We aren’t used to entertaining the idea that beneath our day-to-day thoughts and activities, the underlying assumption of a ‘me’ being there is an unnecessary addition. However, it’s not that absolutely nothing is happening, that there’s absolutely nothing and nobody there. Selflessness means that our assumption of a ‘me’ (or for that matter, something outside called an ‘it’) as an unchanging, permanent thing separated from everything else in the world is a form of confusion.

The teaching of selflessness points out that what we think of as the ‘me’ is not there. Even though the ‘me’ can’t be found, we function anyway. We don’t need to rely on the idea of ‘me’ in order to function in life. The cause of our suffering turns out to be thoughts and actions attached to the idea of a ‘me’ as being something real we have to defend. If this understanding is brought to bear both on the ‘me’ as well as on the rest of our experience, insight and the

capacity to help others will blaze like a bonfire.

Chöd practice became popular because of Machig Labdrön (1031-1129), the most famous female practitioner in Tibet after Yeshe Tsogyal. Her name means Only Mother, Lamp of Dharma. It is said that when she was a baby, a third eye visibly emanated from her forehead. This was not like a normal eye, but a sign of divinity, and people had great faith in her. Machig Labdrön was very, very intelligent. One sign of this was that she had an incredible ability to read. A good reader can read one volume of Tibetan text aloud in a day. An exceptional reader can read aloud three volumes in a day. Machig Labdrön was able to read twelve volumes in a day. They say she could see the back and front of several pages at once. When she spent a month reciting the twelve-volume, 100,000 verse Prajnaparamita Sutra thirty times in succession she gained complete enlightenment. The Prajnaparamita sutras are the most thorough presentation of selflessness spoken by the Buddha in the mahayana tradition.

Machig's achievement was unique in Tibetan history because it is difficult to attain complete realization in one life through recitation of Prajnaparamita, a mahayana method, as opposed to relying on the vajrayana methods of visualization, mantra recitations, inner yogas, and so on. Mahayana methods are said to be gradual and can take many lifetimes to perfect; vajrayana methods are explained to be much faster. Machig later combined her realization of Prajnaparamita with the chöd practice that she'd received from the Indian siddha Padampa Sangye. Her teaching became so popular that it was even brought to India. It was the only practice from the Tibetan tradition that was certified as valid by the Indian panditas, the most learned practitioner-scholars of that era.

Following our afternoon tea break, His Eminence began the empowerments of the protector section of the Rinchen Terdzö. Protectors are the embodiment of the environment of awareness that surrounds and protects the dharma. Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche gave his students a practice called *kasung* to train people in embodying the protector principle. *Ka* means command or teachings, and *sung* means to protect. Kasung is one of the Tibetan words for protector. What protects the dharma, what protects goodness and sanity, is awareness, not weapons or aggression. For example, during a formal teaching, a few people doing kasung practice will sit on the perimeter of the shrine room while maintaining awareness of the overall situation as opposed to taking notes or exclusively listening. One of the mottos of the kasung is, "Victory Over War." The focus of kasungship is creating and protecting an environment of warmth and decency.

The protector principle, besides being a practice, is also an experience. While usually gentle, sometimes the experience of protector principle can be sharp. One of the most direct experiences I've had of this occurred in 1987 while I loaded food cartons into Karmê Chöling's

basement during the visit of His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. I was distracted and making up a loud, senseless rhyme as I stood receiving boxes part way down a storm door stairwell into the basement. I was near enough to Khyentse Rinpoche's window to be heard by His Holiness or anyone in his room, but I was oblivious of that. Suddenly one of the steel storm doors became unbalanced and slammed straight down on the top of my head. I was not hurt, but my energy was cut completely. It felt like being slapped awake.

While the door falling on my head was pure coincidence, the message was clear, 'Watch your mind.' Protector practice makes us more sensitive and available to making that kind of connection. Such sensitivity is particularly important on the contemplative path. One wants to avoid the sidetracks of aggression, self-absorption, grasping, and other neuroses because they can upset stabilization of compassion and insight. Working with protector principle guards one's development and sustains the general environment of the teachings.

There are many different types of protectors just as there are many different gurus and yidams. Different termas have different protectors, as do different lineages, teachers, places, and types of teachings. There are many stories of realized teachers actually meeting the protectors and yidams as if in person. These kinds of stories are beyond our everyday experience and are provocative to think about. My personal feeling about this is that if someone completely realizes and embodies the teachings, the energy around them becomes quite intense. Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's poem titled, *Meetings With Remarkable People*, gives some insight into an enlightened being's experience of the deities. The poem begins a vivid description of meeting with three protectors and concludes with:

I witnessed these extraordinary three friends in the flesh.  
 Surprisingly, they all spoke English.  
 They had no problem communicating in the midst of American surroundings.  
 What do you say about this whole thing?  
 Don't you think meeting with such sweet friends is worthwhile and rewarding?  
 Moreover, they promise me that they will protect me all along.  
 Don't you think they are sweet?  
 And I believe them, that they can protect me.  
 I would say meeting them is meeting with remarkable men and women:  
 Let us believe that such things do exist. p. 125

The word 'protector' is a short way of saying dharma protectors, or *chökyong* in Tibetan. They carry out the four enlightened actions of pacifying, enriching, magnetizing, and destroying. They can be divided according to whether they are a wisdom, action, and worldly protector. Wisdom protectors or *dharmapalas* can be male or female and are known as 'great

## THE GREAT RIVER OF BLESSINGS

black ones', or *mahakala* and *mahakali* in Sanskrit. These are fully enlightened beings sometimes indivisible from a deity like Avalokiteshvara. Action protectors carry out the wishes of the wisdom protectors and are part of their retinue. Worldly protectors (Skt. *lokapala*) are not fully enlightened, but have taken an oath to protect the teachings and practitioners.

The protector section of the Rinchen Terdzö is divided into a section for the mahakalas and action protectors, and a second section for various other protectors, principally the female wisdom protectors. The second section includes, for example, mahakali like Ekajati and lokapalas like Magyal Pomra. A short section related to Bön deities and protectors follows the protector section of the Rinchen Terdzö.

### Sounds And Silence

February 8th

This morning it was still dark when I started work on the blog. Outside, there was a steady soprano chorus of crickets chirping. In the distance an overtaxed radio blared Hindi music at the other end of camp four. Occasionally, the sound of a ritual bell made its way over from the monastery to the bathroom window where I quietly typed as Patricia slept. On the rare mornings when I got up around four o'clock, I heard the gyalings accompanying His Eminence from his bedroom in the monastery to the shrine room for his morning practice.



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

With the coming of dawn around six o'clock, the ravens started their array of calls from the mango trees in our neighbor's yard. Some people thought they were mina birds because their calls were so varied, like little children playing with sounds for fun. Then, small twittering birds that looked like finches added a high background chorus to the backyard symphony that accompanied the coming daylight. About this time, the human sounds started. First, a day helper at the neighbor's house shouted to wake someone to inside to unlock the door. Then, a calling gong rang from the monastery, and at around 6:20 the first bus from the other camps in the Tibetan settlement bugled and grinded its way towards the monastery gates. In the guesthouse, one or two alarm clocks beeped and were swiftly silenced.

At 6:30, the voice of the umdze leading morning chants was broadcast from the loudspeakers perched on the monastery roof, and afterwards the sounds of the reading transmission filled the valley with Lhunpo Rinpoche's powerful staccato. The lung soon



became the main aria for the morning, surrounded by the occasional themes of motorcycle engines, barking dogs, and mooing cows. This all continued until around 8:00, when the first part of the day eased into breakfast in the monks' dining room, the canteen, the guesthouse, and the various houses around the village.

The protector empowerments turned out to have a different atmosphere than the empowerments for the guru, yidam, and dakini. All the protector empowerments were restricted to monastics and people who'd completed ngöndro and could keep the commitment of either daily protector practice or attending a feast that included a protector sadhana at least once a month. Along with the monastics, the group remaining in the shrine room included fifteen or twenty Tibetan and Bhutanese *tantrikas* (non-monastic vajrayana practitioners, all wore robes), a handful of lay people, and most, if not all, of the Westerners who've completed ngöndro. Since the size of the assembly had reduced itself by half, the doors to the huge shrine room could be shut instead of being left open to the veranda. The environment was considerably more quiet and grounded.

Over the last two days we moved quickly through the list of protector empowerments. Some of the abhishekas were skipped because we had already received them during the guru or yidam section. This was the result of the 15th Karmapa's ordering of the Rinchen Terdzö. Many protector empowerments were quite short, which also sped up our pace. Today we also learned that the official conclusion of the Rinchen Terdzö was now set for just after the start of the New Year. At that time His Eminence would formally enthrone the Sakyang and Lhunpo Rinpoche as holders of the Rinchen Terdzö lineage.

I thought it would be interesting to list some of the protectors we were introduced yesterday and today because many are already practiced in Shambhala. The first was Ganapati, who is mentioned in *The Invocation for Raising Windhorse*. Ganapati is an emanation of Avalokiteshvara. We also received the rest of the five Ekajati empowerments in the Rinchen Terdzö. Ekajati is one of the main protectors of the Nyingma teachings, and is practiced at several different centers in Shambhala. Ekajati practice began at Karmê Chöling because Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche said that eventually the dzogchen teachings would be given there. Next we received empowerments for Achi Chökyi Drölma (practiced during the Söpa Chöling three-year retreat), and for Dorje Yudrönma, the protector associated with the Vidyadhara's mirror divination practice. Many of the protectors were guardians of specific terma cycles. Some of the protectors were connected to the kama, the oral lineage of the Nyingma that has come down uninterruptedly from the time of Padmasambhava.

## The Littlest Monk



Photograph by Walker Blaine

Many of us enjoyed watching the little monk shown in this photo. He was among the youngest monks living at Rigon Thupten Mindrolling. Watching him prostrate was entertaining and sweet because it was a bit of a battle between him and his robes. He and another monk about his age often hid near the shrine room door to get a close look at His Eminence's arrival in the afternoon.

When extremely young children come to a monastery it is sometimes due to family misfortune. I remember a very young monk at Benchen Monastery in Kathmandu several years ago. He would wait near the shrine room door at the end of the teachings every day so that he could be sure to have a place beside Tenga Rinpoche at afternoon tea. He was so small that even standing he was barely taller than an adult sitting on the floor. Both of this monk's parents had died suddenly in a car crash. At two years of age he had been placed in the care of Tenga Rinpoche and the monastery.

However, the little monk in Orissa had a different story. The Sakyong Wangmo told us that his name was Dorje and that his parents were allowed to give him to the monastery at an extremely young age because even as a baby he displayed many habitual tendencies towards practice. The Sakyong Wangmo added that several of the older monks who have remained at the monastery after finishing their education have a similar story.

## Stories Of The Kongtrüls From Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche

### Part One

I am pleased to present the first in a two-part post from Acharya Fenya Heupers. Fenya was following the blog and sent a compilation of her notes from a seminar given by the Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche in 1974. The seminar focused on three different Jamgön Kongtrüls. The first, Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye (also known as Jamgön Kongtrül the Great), lived in the 19th century and compiled the Rinchen Terdzö. He was a guru to many great teachers, including Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's prior incarnation, the 10th Trungpa, Chökyi Nyinche.

After Jamgön Kongtrül passed away he had two simultaneous rebirths. Having multiple rebirths is not uncommon for great teachers. Both of these rebirths counted the 10th Trungpa

among their gurus. The first rebirth of Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye was Jamgön Kongtrül of Shechen, meaning Shechen Monastery. He was one of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's root gurus and he bestowed the Rinchen Terdzö upon Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. The second rebirth of Jamgön Kongtrül was Jamgön Kongtrül of Palpung (Palpung Monastery) who gave Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche his monastic vows.

Although Acharya Heuper's notes and quotations are not the exact words of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, they have the raw feeling of his teachings. The quotations in the notes are not exact because the seminar has not been transcribed and edited for publication yet. If you'd like to hear the seminar on the Kongtrüls in its entirety, it can be listened to at the Chronicles of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche website:

[http://www.chronicleproject.com/CTRlibrary/jamgon\\_kongtrul.html](http://www.chronicleproject.com/CTRlibrary/jamgon_kongtrul.html)

*Stories of the Kongtrüls from the Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche*

By Acharya Fenya Heupers

On the joyous occasion of transmission of the Rinchen Terdzö, when Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche becomes the lineage holder of this tradition of his father, the Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, through the tremendous kindness of his father-in-law, His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche, I remembered teachings of the Vidyadhara on Jamgön Kongtrül. In November and December 1974, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche gave a seminar in Boulder on Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye. He taught about his root guru Jamgön Kongtrül of Shechen and what it means to study with an authentic teacher. He also talked about Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye, who collected endangered teachings and empowerments in various collections, the Rinchen Terdzö being one of these collections.

Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye was part of a renaissance of Tibetan Buddhism in the 19th century, known as the Rime, or nonsectarian, movement because this group of teachers did not want to fixate on sectarian differences between the various schools. In those days the Vidyadhara used the word 'ecumenical' for Rime, a word that Westerners were familiar with from the Christian tradition. The Vidyadhara explained the difference: "Rime is not as naive as the 20th century 'ecumenism'. That ecumenism says: we are brothers and sisters, why do we fight? There is good intention in that, but the reality is that we, as human beings, are all brothers and sisters, and that's why we fight. There is no reason for fighting if there is no communication. The biggest problem is trying to unify the cosmos and to structure it so that everybody eats jellyfish and everybody drinks milk. If we give up hope of

unifying the world, and accept chaos as it is, there is a possibility, then there might be peace. It is uncertain whether harmony is the answer to develop peace. Jamgön Kongtrül accepted chaos as well as orderliness. He was able to find profundity within complication.”

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche also explained how sectarianism came into existence: “The teachings originate from experience, and are expressed in words, then the words are recorded and become doctrines. Logic is needed to prove the validity of these doctrines and then there is a battlefield and clashes between the doctrines because they cannot understand each other’s language. Finally there is complete confusion; intoxicated in their own doctrine, they cannot see the other doctrines.”

The Rime movement brought back the contemplative tradition, which is a complete approach to buddhadharma, including both learning and practice, understanding and intuition. Sitting without learning is like wandering blindly; learning without sitting practice is like trying to climb a rock with crippled arms. The understanding of buddhadharma is experiential; it is not rejecting scholarship, but including it. That demands dedication and devotion. Without those we are working only on the surface. So Jamgön Kongtrül had two approaches: to conquer the ocean of learning and to conquer the space of practice. In order to do so, one has to commit oneself 200%. Not that you do not eat or sleep, but they are included in that commitment. Bringing learning and practice together is not difficult. It is like stepping on dog shit; you know what you’ve done, you smell it, experience it, so there is a complete experience of intellect and intuition at the same time.

Jamgön Kongtrül of Shechen used to ask, “How do you feel about it?” instead of asking about facts and figures. The contemplative tradition is personal living experience. So he seemed to be more pleased with Trungpa Rinpoche’s critical attitude than with acceptance.

Jamgön Kongtrül the Great first trained himself thoroughly in the Kagyü tradition; he was a fully ordained monk. He had to live very humbly, had to beg. He learned basic solid Buddhism, about mind and emotions according to the hinayana, about bodhisattvas in the mahayana, and about the play of phenomena of tantra.

Jamgön Kongtrül established himself in Palpung, at Jewel Rock, home of devis and dakinis. He studied texts very arduously to the light of a butter lamp or just the red glow of an incense stick. He practiced meditation with stinging nettles around his meditation box. If he fell over to sleep he woke up by the stinging. He was very

austere, but loved metaphysical jokes. He was a great punster.

After a solid training in one tradition, he studied under 100 masters of various schools. After him these schools faded out. In this way he revived the contemplative tradition. He worked together with the tertön Chogyur Lingpa, with Patrül Rinpoche from the Nyingma tradition, and with Khyentse Rinpoche from the Sakya tradition. He brought together teachings from the eight Buddhist traditions in Tibet, and brought them into the contemplative tradition.

The 10th Trungpa was a student of Jamgön Kongtrül the Great. Frustrated by spiritual materialism he suddenly decided to escape from his monastery and studied with Jamgön Kongtrül the Great. Then he returned to his monastery [Surmang] and realized that it was not so evil, that he did not have to become a mendicant monk. He was planning to visit his guru again; then he heard that his guru had died. He continued his life of practicing meditation.”

## Stories Of The Kongtrüls From Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche

Part Two

This is the second and final installment of the post from Acharya Fenya Heupers, *Stories Of The Kongtrüls From Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche*. We pick up with Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche’s description of the two rebirths of Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye.

Jamgön Kongtrül had two incarnations: Jamgön Kongtrül of Palpung and Jamgön Kongtrül of Shechen. Jamgön Kongtrül of Palpung was a son of the 15th Karmapa. The 15th Karmapa was a student of Jamgön Kongtrül the Great, and had decided to follow his discipline and tradition in the Kagyü order as a married man. This created an uproar. One Kagyü khenpo teacher had wept for seven days when he learned that the Karmapa had married and taken off the monastic robes. The Karmapa proclaimed that his marriage was in keeping with the Kagyü tradition. Then the Khenpo had a vision of the 15th Karmapa in Vajradhara costume with a black hat.<sup>11</sup> The 15th Karmapa’s son turned out to be the first incarnation of Jamgön Kongtrül.

Jamgön Kongtrül of Palpung also found everyone very materialistic and felt that the monastic people wanted to use him to get gifts from benefactors and disciples of Jamgön Kongtrül the Great. So he also decided to escape as the 10th Trungpa had done earlier. He went to the 10th Trungpa and demanded ordination. The 10th Trungpa hesitated because he did not want to make enemies with Palpung, but finally

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<sup>11</sup> The black hat is a symbol of the Karmapa’s lineage.

he gave him ordination and Jamgön Kongtrül became his student.

The other incarnation, Jamgön Kongtrül of Shechen, wanted to be a student of the 10th Trungpa as well as another Rinpoche from Shechen. He had hardships and he camped around monk's houses until the abbot of Shechen monastery created headquarters for him with a tutor and attendant. As a teenager Jamgön Kongtrül of Shechen was very stern and he did not talk very much. Once he warmed up he was very verbal. He was extraordinarily dedicated to learning. The Vidyadhara heard from an older disciple of the 10th Trungpa that when he visited the room of Jamgön Kongtrül of Shechen there were books all over the place. He was sleeping on them, there were pages all over, but he could find the right page. He had extremely bad eyesight from straining too much to read. His guru sent him up to a cave to meditate for several years at a time.

The Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche was ordained by Jamgön Kongtrül of Palpung, and received meditation instruction from Jamgön Kongtrül of Shechen. In working with Shechen Kongtrül, Trungpa Rinpoche "felt paranoid because you cannot fool him with being well-behaved. His main approach is how you carry yourself as a sane person. He could have outbursts with sticks and fists on students to break their stubbornness and aggression. When you work with someone who is not really in the teachings, everything can be very smooth. But if you work with someone who is really connected with the teachings, then you find yourself in contact with reality, with more sharp edges and you become 100% more sensitive.

"Jamgön Kongtrül and I had a small but neat world, so much power in the whole cosmos to conquer. They were the good old days. Don't give up hope in the bad new days, which will become then good old days. We appreciate Kennedy because he was killed; Martin Luther King was a great man. If you'd meet Naropa or Tilopa on the spot you'd be pissed off. History is very deceptive, reality is more important. There is a piece of philosophy for you."

"When you meet your guru, your spiritual friend, there is uncertainty. It is like the nature of a mirror, a reflection between you and guru that is so intense that you think you make the whole thing up. The function of a guru is on different levels: acting very compassionate as an enlightened nanny; as a very efficient accommodating garbage bin; very learned wise in philosophy and wisdom. There is an atmosphere where things are percolating and established."

Trungpa Rinpoche was nine years old when he first met Jamgön Kongtrül of

Shechen. The day before his head was shaved again with a blunt razor and sulphur instead of soap, an excruciating experience. After this ordeal there was a sense of relief and expectation.

At the welcome ceremony Jamgön Kongtrül seemed a kind old monk, nothing extraordinary. He was spontaneous and somewhat sloppy. Trungpa Rinpoche was accused by his tutors of being sloppy, so he expected that they correct Jamgön Kongtrül's sloppiness as well. When everything is valid, well trained, well disciplined there is room for craziness. Jamgön Kongtrül's eyesight was very bad, but sometimes he would spot people from miles away. He did not behave according to what a guru should look like. He embarrassed people, he was spontaneous not impulsive. I [Trungpa Rinpoche] felt for the first time: 'My hang-ups are okay.' There was some human quality and all his attendants were very gentle and sane.



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche recounted learning about meditation from Shechen Kongtrül at Surmang Monastery's retreat center. In retreat in Dorje Khyung Dzong there was the first meditation instruction. I [Trungpa Rinpoche] expected an extraordinary experience. There were beams of sunlight and he would talk about mind. [This next section is from Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's perspective.]

"Do you have a mind?" Shechen Kongtrül asked.

"I can think so many things, I must have a mind." Trungpa Rinpoche replied.

"That's intelligent. Let's sit together and do nothing." Shechen Kongtrül responded.

I expected something extraordinary. Nothing happened. He is pleased. I am confused. Why is he pleased with nothing that happened?



At the second meeting nothing happened, but something happened. A feeling of the room very light, sun, old incense, sense perceptions. Then he instructed me in shamatha-vipashyana, that was a great help. Something happened, nothing happened. Your breath makes something and nothing together.

At the fourth meeting I was excited and asked, "What about enlightenment?" Lots of silence, which was slightly threatening.

"There is no such thing as enlightenment, this is it." Jamgön Kongtrül is so solid there is no question of labeling, just tuning into atmosphere.

Later, the experience is that as soon as you are going to see Jamgön Kongtrül, there is a radiation. Things get more and more intense, a feeling of fear and uncertainty, also a feeling in the bottom of your heart that you are tickled. There is doubt and uncertainty for some time, is this sanity possible? It proves to be possible.

Later the Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche studied with Jamgön Kongtrül Rinpoche in Shechen monastery for several years and was confirmed as a lineage holder. When Chögyam Trungpa wanted to meet him again, Jamgön Kongtrül had been arrested by Chinese troops and put into prison. He died there. The Vidyadhara escaped and came to the West.

[This all comes from notes of this seminar of Fenja Heupers. Any errors in this are mine. (Fenja) I hope it will inspire someone to transcribe the whole seminar and make it available.]

## Time Off

February 10th



Photograph by Walker Blaine

Before the closing chants last night, His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche gave a short dharma talk to the people attending the protector empowerments. His Eminence gave an explanation of the basic elements of liturgical practice with an emphasis on visualization and dissolving a visualization. It was clear to everyone that His Eminence was giving his heartfelt, direct advice to the younger monks about how to develop their practice and

understanding. After breakfast this morning, the knowledgeable Russian translator, Nikolai Almerov gave the Westerners a synopsis of what he'd heard His Eminence teach. The key



point in His Eminence's remarks seemed to be that it easy to memorize the chants and do the rituals, but if that is not joined with real contemplation of the meaning or doing the practice from the inside, then there is not much benefit.

At the end of empowerments yesterday, it was announced that today was a break for everybody. It was good to catch our breath before the concluding month of abhishekas and the coming New Year. A lot of laundry got done while people attended to various projects. In the afternoon, several of us walked to the tiny restaurant-shack built on the shore of the little lake ten minutes walk from the monastery. It stood under some shady trees just down the embankment of the road to the camp. The dirt road on the embankment had rows of vertically hanging prayer flags, more like dozens of fluttering banners, forming a colored wall on either side.

The prayer flags were strung from steel frames. The frames were Jigme Rinpoche's inspiration. He saw that cutting down trees to put up flags was a bad idea in our era. The metal frames were constructed with tie-holes put in at six-inch intervals along the top and bottom edges. The bottom edge was constructed about two feet up from the ground. People then could use the frames to hang lots of six-foot prayer banners and the effect was that hundreds of white, red, yellow, blue, and green bands of fabric fluttered in the wind on either side of the road. The walls of color were soothing to look at and delightful to walk between. Prayer flags have mantras written on them so that the wind can carry the prayers out into the world.

There were some tables set up in the shade outside the lakeshore restaurant, and a couple more tables were set up inside the slightly dilapidated hut. The energetic Tibetan woman who ran the little restaurant was cheerful and kind. She sometimes went about her work with a slumbering infant tied on her back with a red and white shawl. About seven or eight of us spent the late afternoon eating deep-fried chicken and potatoes pies while sipping India's famous Kingfisher beer under the trees.

## Magyal Pomra And Böñ

February 11th

We concluded the section of the Rinchen Terdzö devoted to the protector empowerments today, ending with an abhisheka for a Magyal Pomra practice discovered by Rigdzin Mingyur Dorje. Magyal Pomra is a lokapala, a worldly rather than transcendent protector, who is associated with Machen Pomra, a high mountain and its connecting range in the Golok region of Tibet. One can see this mountain in the distance from a high pass on the way to Surmang monastery from Xining. Gesar of Ling, the enlightened warrior-king of Tibet was born and raised near Machen Pomra. Magyal Pomra protected and sustained him as a child, sometimes

even bringing him chang to drink.

Magyal Pomra is one of the most powerful *nyen* or mountain deities in the Tibetan Himalayas. The *nyen* existed in Tibet before the arrival of Padmasambhava. Magyal Pomra and many other indigenous deities took oaths before Padmasambhava and other greatly realized teachers to protect the Buddhist teachings. He is also one of the 13 dralas who vowed to protect the kings of Tibet. *Nyen* are more powerful than human beings and some are highly realized on the path. Magyal Pomra, for example, is seen as an 8th or 10th level bodhisattva. In less technical language, his meditation is the same as a completely enlightened buddha's, and his time off the cushion is so permeated with virtue and previous positive aspirations that he is moving rapidly and inexorably towards complete enlightenment.

Because *nyen* are like the lords of their particular areas, offerings are made to them in order to keep harmony with the governing forces of the region. Magyal Pomra is described as an armored warrior on a white horse and holding the three jewels (of the Buddha, the teachings, and the sangha) in one hand while raising a whip in the other. Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche once said, 'Gentleness is the best whip.' I strongly suspect that Magyal Pomra carries this kind of whip. Sometimes a white horse will be set free at the foot of Machen Pomra as an offering to Magyal Pomra. One account I read of such an offering said the horse ran straight up the mountain until it was completely out of sight.

Through his relationship with Gesar of Ling, Magyal Pomra cares for those in Gesar's bloodline, such as the Mukpo clan. The Mukpo family lineage includes Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche and his father, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. Magyal Pomra was chosen by the Vidyadhara to be the protector for two mountain retreat places, Shambhala Mountain Center and the wild and delightful southern Colorado retreat, Dorje Khyung Dzong. Magyal Pomra's Tibetan home is in an area called the Blue Lake Province, which is known for its especially pure blue waters. Therefore, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche chose Magyal Pomra as a protector for the blue watered region of Nova Scotia, the center of the Shambhala community.<sup>12</sup>

After the protector empowerments concluded, we received empowerments for four related Bön practices, one of which was a combined supplication to a Bön deity named Bönse Wangdrak Barwa and Magyal Pomra, who is a figure both in the Bön and Buddhist traditions. Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye grew up in an area where many people practiced Bön. In his youth, he meditated at a nearby Bön center and knew the rituals and practices well. Because of his knowledge of Bön and the clarity of his vision, Jamgön Kongtrül chose to include Bön

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<sup>12</sup> The protector empowerments are introductions to specific deities in the context of specific terma practices. The short protector chants done at the different Shambhala centers need no empowerment.

termas in the Rinchen Terdzö. There was some dispute with this decision during his life, but Jamgön Kongtrül proved that the termas were authentic and said they must be included in the collection.

The Bön tradition is much smaller than the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. This was also true in Jamgön Kongtrül's day. The religions endured an uneasy relationship during different periods of Tibetan history. Before the arrival of Padmasambhava, Bön was the main religion in Tibet and practiced by many people in King Trisong Detsen's court. When Padmasambhava arrived, he spoke with the Bön practitioners, learned their views, and conferred with the king. The Bön practices that brought good fortune and were powerful in strengthening one's energy, healing the sick, prolonging life, and so forth were kept. However, King Trisong Detsen banned the Bön practices that were not in harmony with the dharma, such as animal sacrifice. I recently heard that some Nepalese shaman say they are the descendents of the Bön practitioners who were driven from Tibet at that time.

King Trisong Detsen's ban resulted in periods of serious conflict between the two traditions. The worst of it occurred two generations after King Trisong Detsen, when King Langdarma aggressively punished the Buddhist community and nearly destroyed the tradition of monastic ordination. A monk named Palkyi Dorje, who was a previous birth of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, later assassinated King Langdarma.

Overall, Bön can be said to have three forms: a white Bön related to the life enhancing practices, a black Bön that employed more negative elements like animal sacrifice, and the Bön that is most prominent in our modern era. The latter form of Bön has an elaborate nine-stage progression of teachings remarkably similar to the Nyingma presentation of the nine yanas leading to dzogchen practice. Many contemporary Bön practices are identical to those presented in dzogchen although the lineage and deities are different from those presented in Buddhism. The lhasang, popular in the Tibetan tradition and in Shambhala, has its roots in Bön. It is characteristic of Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye's non-sectarian vision that Bön was presented in the context of the Rinchen Terdzö so that everyone's mind could open toward all the spiritual wealth Tibet has to offer.

## The Distance Travelled

February 11th

This afternoon, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche received his usual list of the abhishekas scheduled for the day along with a tally of how many empowerments had passed, and how many we estimated might be ahead. Along with that, Patricia added the following estimates:

Approximate number of times the Sakyong has stood up: 5,980 (10 times per

empowerment times 598, the number of empowerments received so far by our count).

Distance the Sakyong has travelled between his seat and His Eminence's throne during the empowerments thus far: 6.8 miles (5980 times 1 yard each way).

## The Auxiliary Sadhanas

February 11th



Photograph by Walker Blaine

Today we started an important new section of empowerments called the auxiliary sadhanas, more formally known as the auxiliary sadhanas of activity rituals. The auxiliary sadhanas are the second major section of the sadhana section empowerments in the mahayoga section of the Rinchen Terdzö. As you may recall, we started with the empowerments in the tantra section and then moved to the sadhana section, whose first division

was the root sadhanas practices, which are the sadhanas for the guru, yidam, dakini, and protector. Many of the deities in the auxiliary sadhanas section are found in the root sadhanas section too, but in this case the practices are used in context of a ritual for a specific enlightened activity, such as the pacification of suffering, the enrichment of health, and so on. The auxiliary sadhanas were also the final block of empowerments in the sadhana section, and therefore the conclusion of the mahayoga empowerments altogether. In a sense, they also marked the beginning of the end because the two final sections of the Rinchen Terdzö, the abhishekas of the anuyoga and atiyoga, were very brief in comparison to the mahayoga section.

By this time, most of the Westerners who'd been in Orissa for more than a few weeks were talking about plane tickets along with sharing rumors of who might arrive for the final days of this extraordinary event. It was sad to think of the end, but it was nice to know that unlike a movie, which climaxes in the middle, the Rinchen Terdzö would climax during the final days of empowerments with the profound atiyoga section and the enthronement of the new lineage holders. This was somewhat like the path of awakening itself because realization is both the release of suffering and the time one can really appreciate the dharma and be of benefit to others.

The auxiliary sadhanas section lasted several days, and had two main divisions: rituals or

liturgical practices of a general nature and rituals for specific activities. All the practices presented in the auxiliary sadhanas section were still for practices used in specific contexts, however the practices of a general nature were somehow more generic, such as rituals for setting up a retreat. The practices in the rituals for specific activities were for very specific contexts, such as pacifying an epidemic. The word ‘activities’ refers to virtuous or enlightened activities as opposed to actions without virtue, actions that are either meaningless or harmful.

The first division, the rituals of a general nature, was short and completed during the early part of the afternoon. It contained, for example, in the subcategory of rituals for intensive retreat, two empowerments for the wrathful deity, Amritakundalin whose chief function is to remove obstacles. The rituals of a general nature also contained empowerments for the deity Agnideva, the deity related to the element of fire and practiced in the context of a fire offering. The four separate empowerments in this sub-section were related to the different enlightened activities that can be demonstrated by fire: pacification, enrichment, magnetization, and fire’s wrathful aspect of destruction. These empowerments came from termas revealed by Mingyur Dorje. Some rituals of a general nature didn’t need an empowerment. These included practices like ceremonies for the benefit of the dead, and certain kinds of feast and tormas offerings.

After the rituals of a general nature, His Eminence began the empowerments for sadhanas related to specific activity rituals. This category had two parts: the supreme activity rituals, which were the activities focused on liberation, and the ordinary activity rituals, which were activities focused on creating harmonious conditions for the benefit of others and the continuance of the teachings. There were only three supreme activity empowerments, all of which had to do with ‘liberation through wearing.’ Liberation through wearing involves wearing a particular sort of intricate, mantra-filled diagram or text. Specific calligraphies or texts of this type are created so that someone can wear the item either throughout her or his life or at the time of death.

Wearing something in this manner is done in order to achieve realization more easily. In many ways, it is an extended meditation on the meaning of something. Our awareness becomes much stronger at death and therefore, with the right conditions, it can be easier to key into the meaning behind a mantra diagram or another distillation of the teachings. This has the function of helping liberate a practitioner, of helping her or him to realize buddha nature directly. An image of a mantra-diagram for liberation through wearing can be found in some editions of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and Francesca Fremantle’s translation of *The Tibetan Book Of The Dead, The Great Liberation Through Hearing in The Bardo*.

The second section of the specific ordinary activity rituals had a large number of subdivisions. One of the practices presented in this section was to bring blessings down on

sacred places. There were also empowerments for practices to reverse or to turn back obstacles related to the elemental factors of earth, water, wind, and so on. In this and the previous section, there were subsections that contained no empowerments, for example the section on prognostication. The specific ordinary activity rituals broke into five major sections: protection, pacification, enrichment, magnetizing, and wrathful action.

Several of the ordinary activities sounded pretty flashy. However, vajrayana teachers say these kinds of practices are not to be hankered after. Fixation on worldly powers can turn into a potentially dangerous sidetrack. Besides creating obstacles for oneself, practice with a worldly motivation can have negative results for others. The practices of the ordinary activities are performed by realized meditators or practitioners who have been instructed to so by a realized teacher. The ordinary activities, when performed with great compassion, are highly effective in clearing away obstacles and increasing positive circumstances for all beings. Generally speaking, it is best to focus first on the attainment of wisdom and love for all beings, and then build out from there.

### Dorje Lingpa, The Third Kingly Tertön

February 12th

Dorje Lingpa, the third Kingly Tertön, was the third of the five tertöns who were direct reincarnations of King Trisong Detsen, the ruler who firmly planted the dharma in Tibet with the help of Padmasambhava during the 8th century. Dorje Lingpa was in 1346 in central Tibet, the region where the Tibet's ancestral rulers lived and where the Tibetan dharma first flourished.

At the age of seven Dorje Lingpa took monastic vows and studied the sutra and tantra teachings thoroughly. At the age of 13, after having seven visions of Padmasambhava, Dorje Lingpa found his first set of termas by following a terma inventory that had belonged to the second of the Kingly Tertöns, Guru Chökyi Wangchuk, who had passed away about 80 years earlier. Dorje Lingpa discovered his first set of termas in the Tara shrine room at the Tradruk temple in central Tibet. This temple was one of the earliest Buddhist structures in Tibet and was built by the seventh century Tibetan king, Songtsen Gampo. Songtsen Gampo, Trisong Detsen, and Tri Ralpachen were the three ancestral kings who actively propagated Buddhism in Tibet. Presently, a Tara thangka that was embroidered in pearls by Songtsen Gampo's Chinese wife, Princess Wengchen, hangs in the reconstructed upper shrine room at Tradruk temple.

When Dorje Lingpa was 15, he went on retreat in one of Padmasambhava's caves of attainment. During the retreat, Padmasambhava appeared to Dorje Lingpa, constructed a mandala, and gave Dorje Lingpa empowerment. During that retreat, Dorje Lingpa also

discovered a large number of terma cycles along with sacred substances, ritual objects, and four volumes of texts that had belonged to King Trisong Detsen. These events were just start of Dorje Lingpa's activity. He was quite prolific, if that is the right word, and discovered 43 major terma troves and many other minor ones. There are about 20 different termas associated with him spread throughout the entirety of the Rinchen Terdzö, including one Bön terma. Dorje Lingpa discovered many Bön termas during his career, along with termas on medicine and astrology.

Dorje Lingpa was one of the first tertöns to extract termas in public. In one of the most astonishing demonstrations of his miraculous power, Dorje Lingpa emanated two bodies, extracted termas from two places simultaneously, and left impressions of his feet that plunged about forearm's length into solid rock. This occurred at the Chuwori mountain cave complex southwest of Lhasa. Padmasambhava, Yeshe Tsogyal, and Vairochana, the great early translator of whom Jamgön Kongtrül is an emanation, appeared to and taught Dorje Lingpa on several occasions. He also taught and gave empowerments to the many gods and demons of Tibet who came to visit him.

Dorje Lingpa passed away at the age of 65, but his corpse did not decay for three years. This phenomenon still occurs in our era. Today in Thailand, several realized practitioners' bodies remain without decay at their monasteries. What is surprising in the case of Dorje Lingpa is that his body would sometimes speak, give teachings, and recite dedications of merit. After three years his body was finally cremated with many amazing signs. His family lineage still exists in southern Tibet, near Sikkim.

## The Activities Of An Enlightened Monarch

February 12th

Today we continued the empowerments for the auxiliary sadhanas related to various ordinary activities, the enlightened activities of awakened mind in this world. One series of empowerments was for a group of deities called the Four Kings. This empowerment was part of the section of empowerments related to the activity of protecting a region.

The Four Great Kings are usually described as worldly protectors who have vowed to protect the teachings. They are regularly supplicated to protect 'sealed' or closed retreats, and are painted outside the main temple doors of every Tibetan monastery. The Four Kings are also visible on the walls of the post-meditation hall outside the main shrine room of the Boulder Shambhala Center in Boulder. Iconographically, each of the Four Kings has a place in one of the four directions at base of Mount Meru, a mountain that sits in the center of the world according to one of the main Buddhist cosmologies. On and above this mountain are the abodes of progressively more powerful and sublime gods. The Four Kings have rulership



Dhritarashtra, the Great King of the East  
Photograph by Walker Blaine

over several different types of beings that are ordinarily imperceptible and can sometimes interfere with the lives of humans. Through making a positive relationship with the Four Kings one gains a more positive relationship with everybody in their domain.

Sometimes the Four Kings are described as the lowest level of the desire realm gods. Below these gods are everyone else in the desire realm including people, animals, and a variety of beings usually not accepted as real by most scientists. The Four Kings are ‘gods’ because they enjoy a more refined level of experience than we do, but they are part of the desire realm because they still desire objects of the five outer senses, such as beautiful forms, pleasing sounds, and so on. The higher the

god in the desire realm, the more subtle the god’s relationship with the objects of the five senses. Above them, in the god realms of form and formlessness, the deities only have interest in mental objects of pleasure, such as experiences of pure joy or of limitless consciousness.

It’s worth a brief digression here to say that rebirth as a god is not the liberation from suffering famous in Buddhist practice. What liberates us from suffering is a direct experience of the absence of a sufferer. If we have confidence and stability in the recognition that there is actually no sufferer, we are able to deal with our obstacles in any realm more skillfully and we can be of real help to everybody else. At the same time, it is important to train the mind towards the level of mental stability prevalent in the more refined states of existence because a stable mind provides the support for contemplation and insight into profound topics like the absence of a sufferer.

Other empowerments today included those for types of reversals, meaning turning back or averting obstacles, and empowerments for protection from obstacles in general, protection from illness, and so on. I have been reflecting that the auxiliary sadhanas express the powers one would need in order to properly rule the world as an enlightened monarch. A Sakyong, as the ruler of Shambhala world and as an example of joining the vision and practicality, needs to be able to enact all kinds of enlightened actions for the benefit his or her kingdom. A general description of an enlightened ruler’s activities in the form of the four dignities is presented in Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche’s book, *Ruling Your World*, and in Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche’s seminal text, *Shambhala, The Sacred Path Of The Warrior*.



## Moving Towards A New Year

February 13th

The fastest Rinchen Terdzö we've heard of took a month and a half. It was given by the previous incarnation of Dudjom Rinpoche at Rewalsar, the little lake town that Tibetans call Tso Pema, in foothills of the Indian Himalayas. I think this amazing event might have occurred at Dudjom Rinpoche's lakeside monastery, Orgyen Herukay Podrang. This monastery is home to a round stupa designed by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. During that extremely fast Rinchen Terdzö, Dudjom Rinpoche bestowed both the empowerments and the reading transmissions. In fulfillment of a prophecy, it was the 10th and final time he bestowed the Rinchen Terdzö during his life. Dudjom Rinpoche is also the author of the exhaustive book, *The History Of The Nyingma Lineage*, which was a great help in writing the blog.

The longest Rinchen Terdzös have lasted six months. This was the case when the previous Kalu Rinpoche gave the Rinchen Terdzö at Sherab Ling, near Bir, India in 1984. The six-month figure is a bit misleading because the event included a one-month break for group practice. We fell somewhere in the middle of things and concluded all but the final empowerments just before Shambhala Day, Losar, which fell on the 25th of February, the next new moon. The Tibetan New Year traditionally takes three days or more to celebrate. It is also a time when everybody, including the teachers, is 'at home,' spending time with family. The start of the New Year is also a chance for friends to visit one another and for people to make a personal connection with their teachers at the start of a new cycle.

This afternoon's abhishekas began with some final empowerments from Chogyur Lingpa's cycle of seven pacifying goddesses, a terma cycle we'd started yesterday. The pacifying section of the auxiliary sadhanas section was long and the atmosphere in the shrine room has been soft for the last few days. Often pacifying practices are associated with the color white. The practices introduced to us have been for deities like White Tara and the white long-life deity name Ushnishavijaya (also called Jaya Devi) whom I've seen in an old Tibetan thangka painted directly above the head of one of the Rigdens of Shambhala. We also received two Medicine Buddha practices. Health care practitioners do Medicine Buddha practice because it helps increase sensitivity and healing energy. The practice is also popular with people working with illness themselves because it speeds the process of recovery.

We ended the day partway through a long series of empowerments for Garuda practices. These practices focus on overcoming ignorance and the causes of illness or epidemics. Garudas are a feature in both Buddhist and Hindu iconography. The garuda is the sovereign of birds and hatches fully-grown, already able to fly. Mythologically, garudas are the enemy of nagas, who in this case symbolize ignorance rather than being guardians of the Prajnaparamita teachings. In the Shambhala tradition, garudas symbolize vast, unobstructed

mind fully fathoming space.

## Feminine Principle, Powerful Blessings

February 14th



Semo Palmo, Khandro Tseyang, Sonam Palkyi (a Ripa cousin)  
Semo Pede, Semon Sonam  
Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

It has been heartening to see that the monks in Orissa are both ordinary boys who like to play and young people in the red-robed world of a religious tradition. Among the monks there are a few who are obviously special. One of them, who looked to be about twelve years old, sat through every single empowerment in perfect posture, closely attending to the events like the best of lamas. He was like a lighthouse in the midst of a sea of red movement. After a while, we

started to worry about him because he was a bit *too* still during the empowerments, but later we noticed he was talking and joking with the other monks once he left the shrine room.

It was wonderful to watch the Sakyong Wangmo and her three sisters relate to the five or six youngest monks during the Rinchen Terdzö. At the end of almost every day, after nearly everyone but the chöpons had left the shrine room, some or all of the sisters stayed on to visit with the little boys, talking with them, giving them candy, and showing them motherly love and attention. The teenage monks looked after the youngest ones as well. The very littlest were seated with some of the oldest monks during the abhishekas, and if one of the young ones did something especially cute, there were always a few people beaming at them.

The very smallest of the little monks had perhaps one of the biggest experiences of devotion around His Eminence. The clearest sign of this was his enthusiasm about prostrations. A prostration is done by bringing the palms together and touching them to the forehead, throat, and heart to signify devotion of body, speech and mind, before kneeling and touching the hands and forehead to the ground as a gesture of humility and respect toward the teacher. Technically, this is a half-prostration. A full prostration is when one puts all four limbs flat on the ground and touches the forehead to the earth before standing up again. It is the tradition to prostrate three times before receiving teachings from a realized teacher. In the Tibetan world, three prostrations are usually offered before sitting down in a shrine room.

The littlest monk absolutely loved prostrating to His Eminence. In fact, he sometimes

nearly went airborne as he did his prostrations at the start of the teachings. One day last week, he prostrated with so much force that he popped himself out of his lower robes, much to the amusement of everyone around him. The older monks belted him back into his robes in short order. The little monk didn't seem particularly concerned about the situation. That probably should be some sort of teaching to the rest of us.

Today we continued the empowerments for the auxiliary sadhanas. We were introduced several more Garuda practices related to before moving on to other practices for pacifying obstacles. One empowerment given late in the day involved a cleansing ritual, pouring water from a vase on the recipients' heads as part of the ceremony. In this abhisheka about fifteen people with diseases or infirmities related to movement, such as stroke or palsy, were asked to come to the forward. They received the cleansing water on their heads after the Sakyong and the other main recipients. It was moving and humbling to watch this happen. Several of these people came for the entire Rinchen Terdzö; some had travelled from far away in order to receive this particular empowerment.

His Eminence is famous in the Tibetan community for his power with this kind of practice, a meditation that removes negative influences called *drip* (pronounced 'dreep'). This is not the *drip* referred to as 'obscurator' in liturgical practice. It's a different spelling in Tibetan and refers to a kind of picked-up, bad influence from someone or something external. This might be from a particularly negative person or environment, or from a type non-human being, of which there are several in the Tibetan medical view.

## The Importance Of Lineage

February 15th

There are the three lineages of the Rinchen Terdzö that come to Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche through His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche. The most important Rinchen Terdzö lineage, in terms of Shambhala's history, comes from Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye to Shechen Gyaltsap, then to Shechen Kongtrül, then to Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, and finally to His Eminence. It is the most important lineage for the Sakyong to receive for many reasons, a main one being the practice connections it establishes between him and his father. It is interesting to note that Lady Konchok Paldron, the mother of the Sakyong, was also present at Yak Gompa when the Vidyadhara bestowed the Rinchen Terdzö on Namkha Drimed Rinpoche.

The second lineage to His Eminence comes from Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye to the 15th Karmapa, Khakyab Dorje, then to Jamgön Kongtrül of Palpung, then to the previous Kalu Rinpoche (1905-1989) who then bestowed the Rinchen Terdzö on Namkha Drimed Rinpoche. At that time, His Eminence was not the principle recipient as he was at Yak Gompa. The 15th

Karmapa, like the 10th Trungpa, was a true spiritual son of Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye. He studied impartially with teachers from other lineages, and though not prolific, he was also a minor tertön. Karmapa Khakyab Dorje undertook a revised and expanded printing of the Rinchen Terdzö at his seat, Tsurphu monastery in Tibet in the early part of the twentieth century. I think that only one complete copy of this final Tibetan edition of the Rinchen Terdzö managed to escape Tibet. It is a true miracle that these teachings made it into our modern era.

The final lineage of the Rinchen Terdzö came to His Eminence through his own father, Drubwang Jigme Tsewang Chokdrub Rinpoche. As you will recall, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's predecessor, the 10th Trungpa, Chökyi Nyinche, wanted to receive this lineage of the Rinchen Terdzö, but was unable to receive it due to Drubwang Jigme Tsewang Chokdrub being ill. It is likely that Namkha Drimed Rinpoche's grandfather, Drubwang Ngedon Rinpoche, received the transmission directly from Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye and that the transmission had been in the Ripa family since that time.

A spiritual lineage is not like an ordinary genealogy or a list of company presidents or university deans because it marks a direct, living transmission of teachings, practice, and realization. For students, knowing who a lineage comes from is important because it instills confidence and devotion. Without a lineage there is no way to receive the heart of the transmission, which is a face-to-face experience of realization. Every Buddhist teacher can trace a lineage all the way back to Shakyamuni Buddha. Vajrayana lineages are traced to Shakyamuni and to transcendent buddhas who appeared to root teachers during the initial stages in the development of the lineage.

Today we continued to receive empowerments from the auxiliary rituals' section of practices for the pacification of different kinds of suffering and obstacles. By the end of the day the atmosphere in the shrine room seemed 'peaced out'. Yesterday and today we concluded earlier than usual, and today we even had a 30-minute break in the middle the afternoon, three times longer than usual. This allowed His Eminence time to open an additional set of practices for empowerments he wanted to bestow later in the afternoon. People took the time to sit in the warm sun in the courtyard, to relax on the grass in the shade, or to circumambulate the monastery reciting mantras.

### A Kingly Minister

February 16th

Chögyal (King of Dharma) Ratna Lingpa was born in 1403 in Lhodrak, the birthplace of Marpa the Translator who lived 300 years earlier. All tertöns have a direct connection to Padmasambhava from a former life, like the Five Kingly Tertöns. Ratna Lingpa was like a king of the teachings during his life, but he was not one of the Five Kingly Tertöns. At the time



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

when he was a close student of Padmasambhava, Ratna Lingpa was Langdro Konchok Jungnay, one of King Trisong Detsen's ministers.

Ratna Lingpa was exceptional in that not only did he learn to read and write by the age of six, he remembered his past lives so clearly that he could teach the dharma to himself and others by the age of eleven. When he was 27, Padmasambhava appeared to Ratna Lingpa as a man wearing a yellow hat

and robe and he gave Ratna Lingpa a long inventory of termas to find in his life. Ratna Lingpa went on to discover 25 large terma troves. There are about fifty of his termas in the Rinchen Terdzö.

I think one of the reasons why Ratna Lingpa was called a king of dharma may be connected to the manner in which he gave teachings. There were never any obstacles—nothing ever went wrong—and there were many miracles when he taught. While miracles are unusual, to me it seems more remarkable to be without obstacles because of the Buddhist teachings about cause and result, often simply called karma. To say a teaching happened without obstacle would be to say that the karma of the teacher and his disciples was free of causes for obstacles. That's pretty incredible to think about. In Orissa, His Eminence didn't seem to have any obstacles during the Rinchen Terdzö, but the assembly encountered several minor ones such as power failures, illnesses, and so on. These were all due to our individual karmas mixing together at the Rinchen Terdzö.

Because everything was so perfect, Ratna Lingpa was able to discover all the termas that had been hidden for him to find in his current life. He then went on to find termas that had been concealed for him to discover in his next two lives. This resulted in him also being known as Shikpo Lingpa and Drodül Lingpa. There are other tertöns who have similar names to his, which can be a bit confusing.

There is a detail to his life that makes him like Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye and Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo. Ratna Lingpa gathered and preserved the transmission of the Nyingma tantras, the original Nyingma vajrayana root texts that were brought to Tibet from India. The Nyingma tantras had not been gathered into a single collection by Ratna Lingpa's lifetime, and he recognized that they were about to disappear. So Ratna Lingpa traveled

everywhere to collect all the texts he could and then he found the one remaining lineage holder in order to request to receive the transmission himself. Afterwards, he arranged the collection of the Nyingma tantras and began to transmit the lineage to others. It is thanks to him and Jigme Lingpa, who later re-edited the collection, that the Nyingma tantras are available in our time.

Today we continued to the end of the empowerments for pacification of various sorts of difficulties. Most of these empowerments were related to ultimate pacification of bad karma and obscurations. Afterwards, we received two long-life abhishekas. We'll continue with this series of empowerment series of tomorrow.

### Time Travel Without Electricity

February 17th

We had a power failure that lasted an entire abhisheka today. This was a new experience because usually the monastery had good back-up electricity. Often we lost the power for a few seconds, and then a back-up system re-illuminated His Eminence's text and the speakers came back in full force. The empowerments stopped briefly, if at all, and we were golden, as they say.

This afternoon when electricity vanished the auxiliary power did not kick in. However, Namkha Drimed Rinpoche continued reading the liturgy without missing a beat. This gave an unexpected glimpse into the empowerments of the past. The shrine room was much dimmer with only the afternoon sunlight for us to see with, but what surprised me was the quiet. His Eminence suddenly sounded very, very far away. There was an immediate hush to the room.

As it was in Tibet when paper was a luxury, few people in Orissa actually had the liturgies for the Rinchen Terdzö in front of them. His Eminence, the Sakyong, Jigme Rinpoche, Lhunpo Rinpoche, the umdze, and the chöpons seemed to be the only ones. That's not surprising given the size of the text. But when the sound disappeared, none of the main recipients stayed at their seats with their texts because they needed to hear His Eminence. The principle recipients quickly formed a circle around the throne to listen intently. This was necessary because empowerments involve repeating vows spoken by the teacher and doing visualizations as the teacher explains them.

Besides His Eminence, the only people who could freely refer to a liturgy were the umdze and the chöpons not involved in bringing implements to and from the shrine. The rest of us were straining to hear what was going on until we got to sections of the empowerment that had been memorized, the lines formally accepting the vows, some longer stretches of liturgy familiar to Vajrakilaya and Vajrayogini practitioners, the mandala offering, and the

dedications. At those moments everybody was right on cue and the room boomed with the appropriate responses. The rest of the time the shrine room was a quiet, attentive space.

We've been through brief spans without power before, but nothing like today. We've been so fortunate that everyone could clearly hear every word spoken by His Eminence. In Jamgön Kongtrül's time and in Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's, it must have been rare that more than a few selected people could hear the teachings during a large gathering the way we've been hearing things almost every day. Our good fortune in modern times is a remarkable situation that is easily taken for granted. His Eminence later explained that he sat on a cushion right next to Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche at Yak Gampa.

All of today's empowerments were part of an auxiliary rituals subsection that focused on enrichment, bringing out or increasing positive qualities. The first group of empowerments continued a theme started yesterday, empowerments for enriching life and long-life practices. Having a long life is seen as a prerequisite to developing good qualities in ourselves and others because if one is in good health it is easier to accomplish one's goals.

Following those empowerments, we received two empowerments to increase or enrich *prajna* (Tib. *sherab*). Prajna is translated in a variety of ways: knowledge, wisdom, superior knowledge, discrimination, and intelligence. There is also a range of manifestations of prajna, beginning with simply being able to name something as good, bad, red, or blue. Prajna can also refer to basic know-how, understanding how things work, whether that's how to fix a car or balance a checkbook. The highest type of intelligence, the focus of empowerments to enrich prajna, is the part of us that can understand and know profundity in a clear, unbiased way. This type of prajna sees ultimate truth without doubt. Out of that comes genuine compassion.

## Prosperity And Happiness

February 18th

Today Kristine McCutcheon told us Lama Tenzin had created a new type of assistant chöpon. The new helper was responsible for getting out the volumes of text needed for the next day. Setting up the texts ahead of time was necessary because some liturgies relevant to an empowerment were not found in the same volume the empowerment liturgy itself was located in. The additional chöpon brought the total number of chöpöns for the Rinchen Terdzö to about twelve, although occasionally more than that were needed. Young apprentices were called in on the spot to bring vases and other items to the assembly when the empowerments got especially elaborate.

To make things easier during the empowerments, the shrine room was arranged in neat double rows facing His Eminence, with an aisle behind each pair of rows to allow the chöpöns

to get to everybody quickly during the afternoon. When it came time for the final blessings, each pair of rows huddled together to make extra space behind them for the final train of teachers and chöpons who would come through with the vases, icons, tormas, and other empowerment articles. At the end of the days with the most empowerments, there were at least 20 lamas and chöpons moving through the crowd in the shrine room before we started closing chants.

The situation on the veranda, the three interconnected porches surrounding the back and sides of the shrine room, was chaotic compared to the shrine room. Because there was no system of seating for the people on the porch, the blessings at the end of the day had to be free-form. The veranda became filled with long, bulging masses of people pressed against the walls and terrace railings. Even though everyone made an effort to stay in a group, there was a wobbly atmosphere, sort of like standing in a rowboat.

One of the kusung who accompanied the Sakyong said it was another world out on the veranda. During the day it was like a small encampment of lay people on blankets reciting mantras, spinning prayer wheels, and checking out the scene. It reminded me so much of Tibet in its earthiness. It sometimes took the last empowerment items thirty minutes to make it back from the veranda to the shrine room. During that time, everyone sang the main mantras of the day until the start of closing chants. Whenever one of the rinpoches reappeared at the back door to the shrine room, all 600 of us in the shrine room leapt to our feet to greet the returning teacher with a bow. Often this happened more than once: first with His Eminence, then with the Sakyong, and then with one of the other rinpoches.

Lama Tenzin, reflecting on his new volume-gathering assistant, told Kristine McKutcheon, “The next Rinchen Terdzö is going to be much easier.” When Kristine told me this, I said, “They’ve probably been saying that since the 1890s.”

Of course, the joke’s on us because the Rinchen Terdzö is coming to the West. In the modern world, Shambhala and many other communities are the proud inheritors of Jamgön Kongtrül’s spiritual legacy. There’s already been a lot of work done on the Rinchen Terdzö, and we are always looking for ways to improve things for the future. Our daily empowerment lists, built upon the work of Peter Roberts’, will be stored along with various ideas and observations, ready to bring out when the Rinchen Terdzö is to be performed for the next Sakyong. Shortly after returning to Halifax, Patricia got a request for her work to be used as a basis by Western chöpons preparing for another Rinchen Terdzö.

Today we concluded the empowerments for the enrichment of wisdom. Among these were abhishekas for Manjushri, Sarasvati, and White Vajravarahi. Then we moved to



empowerments for practices aimed at increasing merit, prosperity, enjoyments, fame, and so on. There's a famous Tibetan story about the relationship between wealth and karma. It's about a very good meditator, a yogi in retreat whose practice was so stable that he could talk to the most powerful deity of wealth, Vaishravana, as if they were face to face. The meditator was a beggar and decided to improve his situation through intensive practice of enriching in order to increase his wealth. However, nothing came of his practice, so he asked Vaishravana what the problem was. Vaishravana said, "I can't do much because you don't have any merit," meaning that the meditator didn't have the necessary karma from a prior life to have wealth in this life. One version of this story has Vaishravana saying, "Do you remember that extra bit of food that fell from the serving spoon into your begging bowl yesterday? That was the result of your practice." We get what we sew. The purpose of enriching practice is to ripen what we've already planted.

One important implication of our present experience being the ripened result of previous actions is that if we enjoy the fruits of happiness and prosperity that were planted earlier, but we do not plant new seeds to ripen in the future, it will be that much harder to experience happiness and prosperity later on. This is one reason why the teachings focus on cultivating generosity, the seed of wealth, rather than focusing on trying to get to the result of unripened good karma from the past.

In any experience, the mind is the primary cause. The previous Kalu Rinpoche said that if we wanted to know what our past lives were like, we should look at our life right now, and that if we wanted to know what our future lives would be like, we should look at our mind right now. In general, the merit generated by generosity is not based on how valuable a gift might be; it's the mind that gives the gift that counts. It is said that a boy who selflessly offered a mud patty to Shakyamuni Buddha created the karma to be reborn as a king.

## Losar Approaching

February 19th

Today we received more empowerments related to increasing prosperity, wealth, enjoyments, and so on. We estimated there were seven days of empowerments left, although the last few days of empowerments would be postponed until after Losar, the three-day long Tibetan New Year. Usually Losar is a big time for parties, fireworks, and so forth, but this year the Office of the Tibetan Government in Exile requested that secular festivities be kept to a minimum in order to express solidarity with the people who have suffered so much in Tibet. Because the coming year was the 50th anniversary of the Lhasa Uprising and because of the unrest and violence in Tibet prior to Olympics, last year was a difficult one for the Tibetan community.

The days just before the New Year are a time for intensive meditation. At every Tibetan



Photograph by Walker Blaine

monastery, the week to ten days before Losar are devoted to additional practices to clear away any negative karma that might have accumulated during the preceding year. It's also a time to clean up unfinished business in one's worldly life. The group of lamas practicing in the rooftop Gesar temple started the monastery's end-of-year practice intensive five days ago. The plan was to break on the 23rd of February, two days before Losar, so that all the monastics could

perform the final day of the end-of-year practices together as a group.

## Rigdzin Terdak Lingpa

February 19th

Rigdzin Terdak Lingpa (1646-1714) is the tertön name of the founder of the Mindroling tradition, Minling Terchen Gyurme Dorje. He is often simply called Minling Terchen, the Great Tertön of Mindroling. Minling Terchen was a major contributor to the Rinchen Terdzö, both as a prolific tertön and as a preserver of the terma tradition. He and his brother, Lochen Dharma Shri, assembled a collection of vital termas called the *Dobum*, *The Wish-Fulfilling Vase*, which Jamgön Kongtrül used as a basis for what to include in his collection. The two-volume *Dobum* is also part of the supplementary volumes included with the Rinchen Terdzö. Many of the empowerments in the Rinchen Terdzö were given according to the presentation in the *Dobum*. Like Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye, Minling Terchen wrote empowerment rituals for several of terma practices discovered by other tertöns.

*Rigdzin*, the first word in Minling Terchen's terma name, is the Tibetan for the Sanskrit title, Vidyadhara. This word is used to refer to some of the greatest masters in the Nyingma lineage, and it is also used to the first and most highly accomplished lineage holders in the Nyingma tradition. Calling someone a vidyadhara doesn't happen very much outside the Nyingma tradition. The syllable, *rig* or *vidya*, means awareness or the knowledge. The second syllable, *dzin* or *dhara*, means to hold or to grasp. A vidyadhara is someone who holds awareness, someone who holds complete realization and actualization of our most basic nature, our fundamental state of being.

In the Nyingma teachings, there is also a famous categorization called the four levels of vidyadharas. These are the four highest levels of realization in dzogchen, which is the most refined presentation of mind and meditation in the Nyingma tradition. The first level of a vidyadhara refers to someone who has perfected his or her meditation on a deity to the point

that the deity meditation is as stable in the mind as a physical body is in this world. After death, a vidyadhara of this level can consciously arise in the state between births in the form of the deity, much like in a lucid dream. Someone who has attained the highest of the four levels of a vidyadharas has brought the realization of mind's basic nature to its perfection and transformed the ordinary body into a body of light. At death these practitioners leave no physical remains behind. Padmasambhava and Yeshe Tsogyal accomplished the rainbow body, the level of the fourth vidyadhara.

Vidyadhara is also the title Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche assumed toward the end of his life in the West. As I received empowerments for the huge number of Nyingma practices and lineages Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche carried, it seemed an interesting coincidence that he left his students with such a Nyingma title. While there were a lot of interesting reasons presented for why Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche changed his title, the end result was that now we formally refer to him in a dzogchen way.

Mingling Terchen lived about 300 years before Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye. He was born in southern central Tibet. His father, Nyötön Samdak Thrinlay Lhundrub, was Minling Terchen's teacher in his youth, and his mother, Lhandzin Yangchen Drölma, came from a noble family. Like many other great tertöns, he was an extraordinary child. His father began empowering him in the Eight Logos practices when he was four. Besides his father, one of his main teachers was the fifth Dalai Lama.

When he was 10, Minling Terchen had a vision of Padmasambhava. Due to this he had a stable recognition that all of life's appearances were like a dream. If our practice and understanding are good that is how we should instinctively understand our experience. Minling Terchen never wavered from this understanding, day or night. This is not easy to accomplish at any age, especially at 10. By the age of 11 he was acting as his father's lineage heir and had perfect command over all aspects of whatever ritual tradition he was taught.

Minling Terchen began his career as a tertön around the age of 13. While revealing many terms in his life, some of them publically, he was also known for doing very intensive retreat practices in a variety of the practice traditions of his era. These included practices from the Nyingma tradition, which arrived in King Trisong Detsen's time, and the later traditions, which arrived from India from the end of the 10th century onward. He often did these intensives in renowned retreat places like the Samye Chimpu. These days, Samye Chimpu is about a day's drive from Mindroling monastery, the Tibetan seat of Minling Terchen's tradition.

As time went by, Minling Terchen's initial realization that all appearances were like

dreams became stronger and stronger. It is said that many people who met him would be spontaneously liberated; they would have an experience like his, though probably not as stable. This was a period when his physical presence was the main way he benefited students. At the age of 32, his realization of enlightened speech became very strong and he was able to give people an immediate experience of realization through how he taught the dharma. Enlightened speech is connected to the inner energy flows in the body becoming purified. Purification of inner energy leads to being able to communicate with others in a completely pure, effective, and direct way. At the age of 35, he became able to teach on the level of mind. Though he continued to teach with words, he also could move the minds of his students into realization so they were not stuck in an intellectual understanding.

Students from all over Tibet and from all walks of life came to study and practice with Minling Terchen. When he was offered a great deal of wealth he would immediately use it to help others through building monasteries, assisting the poor, and undertaking projects like printing texts and building stupas for the preservation of the teachings. He was completely impartial and while being a storehouse of the major streams of Nyingma teachings of both kama and terma, he also maintained the lineages of other schools such as the chöd practice of Machig Labdrön. Minling Terchen also maintained the Shangpa Kagyü lineage, which was later cared for and revitalized by Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye.

In 1714, at the age of 69, Minling Terchen became ill and began to give final meditation instructions to his family members. He passed away in the manner of a highly realized teacher, making aspirations and giving teachings up to the moment of his passing. He departed showing many miracles. His main successor was his younger brother, Lochen Dharma Shri, a very famous teacher in his own right. Their family lineage continues to this day. The Venerable Jetsünma Khandro Rinpoche, who hosted the Rinchen Terdzö in Northern India, is a direct descendent.

## Shambhala And Mahayoga

February 20th

Today we concluded the abhishekas from the auxiliary rituals' section of enriching practices, and began the empowerments from the next subsection, magnetizing. Tomorrow we will conclude the mahayoga section of Rinchen Terdzö. The mahayoga, which we started on December 5th, included about 650 empowerments. Mahayoga is the first of the three types of vajrayana practice that are the focus of the termas in the Rinchen Terdzö. Mahayoga, anuyoga, and atiyoga or dzogchen are the highest presentations of reality in the Nyingma tradition. A presentation of reality is a teaching about what mind and experience are like when totally freed from neuroses and habitual ways of seeing things.

In relation to anuyoga and atiyoga, mahayoga is explained to be like the ground; its practices are the starting point to quickly accomplish complete realization, the goal of the vajrayana tradition. Broadly speaking, mahayoga practices emphasize visualization of an enlightened deity in a world of complete purity. Visualization practice stands as a remedy for



Offerings to His Eminence at the end of the Dzogchen Retreat  
Photograph by Walker Blaine

what we normally experience, our usual ideas and habits. From a contemplative perspective, and in particular from the point of view of people who've traversed the entire path to buddhahood, while some of our habits and ideas seem good and useful, many of them are not helpful to us in either the long or short run. The list of unhelpful habits is headed by seeing things dualistically, which is the source of the rest of our suffering. In contrast to this is an unbiased perspective, the view of purity and equality that is pointed out by and embodied in the mahayoga practices. When we recognize and have ongoing confidence in the vision of ourselves and the world that is presented through the mahayoga practices, this radiates out into our day-to-day experience, the suffering in our lives will be pacified and we will easily be able to do things that are of benefit to ourselves and others. This is the aim of Buddhist practice.

The unbiased perspective fostered through mahayoga is not foreign to us. The seed of it is found in experiences like appreciating the beauty of a flower opening its petals to the morning sun, hearing beautiful music, or meeting someone who has genuine dignity. Those kinds of moments in our lives—gentle, simple, and aware—give a glimpse into the basis for mahayoga practice as well as the basis for creating enlightened society. Meditation practice enables the mind to become more stable, more able to recognize the fundamental goodness in our experience. From that ground, all the world can grow towards peace, harmony, and benefit for all.

Another way to understand the purpose of mahayoga visualization practice is say that if we knew that all, literally all, of our experience was a mental projection, we'd be likely to handle our general mental state, our emotional upheavals, and our interactions with others in a more gentle, sane, and compassionate way. Visualization practice under the guidance of a

realized teacher helps one towards that understanding. It is crucial to have a living teacher when doing these practices because obstacles associated with dualistic forms of visualization can completely undermine one's progress on the path.

Anuyoga, the next of the three sections of practice, focuses primarily on what's called completion stage meditation. It is called the completion stage because it is the completion of what's been worked on in the development stage, the complex visualization practices emphasized by mahayoga. The mahayoga concentrates on visualization, mantras, and so forth as a means to develop a sacred outlook toward the world. Then, in anuyoga, one emphasizes working with the subtle energies of one's body and mind with little or no reliance on visualization techniques. There are still visualizations practices in anuyoga, but the meditations concentrate on transforming the energies already present in our body and mind, rather than principally concentrating on visualizations to transform our outlook. In a sequential presentation, the transformation of outlook has already been accomplished in the mahayoga before one starts the anuyoga practices.

In contrast to mahayoga and anuyoga, the atiyoga teaches going beyond everything. The atiyoga, the last of the nine yanas, can also be described as the unification of mahayoga and anuyoga. Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche presents another perspective of this in *The Lion's Roar: An Introduction to Tantra*, saying that first we have a lot of costumes, then we relate directly to our heart and brain, and in the end we become completely naked. The ati practices present the essence of the path in a completely unadorned way.

The mandala of the Shambhala community set up by the Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche was structured according to the principles of mahayoga practice. In the center sits the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo who embody the masculine and feminine principles of enlightened rulership. The mandala around them is everyone involved in creating enlightened society, the Shambhala kingdom. It's a huge visualization, if we were to call it that, involving everyone at all levels in the community: the acharyas and other teachers, administrators, householders, monastics, children, artists of the court, people serving in many ways at centers and retreats, and very importantly, the kasung who embody the protectors of the teachings. At the same time, everyone is personally investigating the teachings on basic goodness, on buddha nature. In that sense, that makes everyone a monarch of Shambhala; bringing out our buddha nature is what makes us noble. When the outer expression comes together with inner practice, what occurs is of greatest benefit to the whole world.



## Children, Mother Lineage, And Magnetizing

February 21st

More guests arrived today for Losar and the conclusion of the Rinchen Terdzö. Dorothée Rosen's redheaded teenage daughter Natalie, along with her friend Alana Zeigler, plopped down on the narrow shrine room carpet in front of me yesterday afternoon. They arrived in time for the start of the last empowerments of the day. It was a delight, and somehow a relief, to see Shambhala and Padma Ling kids at the Rinchen Terdzö.

The number of lay children from the Tibetan community attending the empowerments also grew as we approached Losar. By the beginning of this week there were fifty or more of them at the monastery every day. They ranged in age from a few months old up to whenever childhood is supposed to end. Many of the young monks eagerly awaited one top-knotted toddler

who liked to meander through the rows toward the end of each afternoon. This little boy occasionally pretended to play ritual instruments as he sat with some of the lay elders leaning against the wall near the back door to the monastery. During his walks in the shrine room, this youngster liked to 'bless' young monks with a pat on the head. On some occasions, he would loudly smack one or another young monk square in the face.

The presence of so many lay children reminded me of something special about the monastic community in Orissa. Unlike many monasteries, Rigon Thupten Mindrolling has a leader who is not a monk. Because Namkha Drimed Rinpoche is a lay teacher, his mandala is unlike that of a traditional monastery, at least during ceremonies like these. In most monasteries, women would not be seated so close the center of the action. While Namkha Drimed Rinpoche's sons are the heirs of the Ripa lineage, His Eminence's consort Khandro Chime, and his four daughters, have all had seats of honor, particularly the Sakyong Wangmo. Most monasteries do not reflect the presence of the feminine like this. It's unusual and inspiring for me as a Westerner.



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

Today we concluded the mahayoga section of the Rinchen Terdzö. The last ten days were devoted to empowerments related to the four buddha activities or four karmas, as they are more commonly known. We started with empowerments for practices related to the first karma, pacification of different kinds of suffering, although there was another section just prior to that, 'Protection'. Then we moved to the second karma, enriching good qualities of prosperity, harvests, the precious teachings of the Buddha, and so on. Next, we received practices connected with activity of magnetizing, of attracting good connections in order to benefit others. The fourth karma, known as destroying or wrathful action, was brief and had only a few empowerments.

There was an amusing coincidence at the conclusion of the magnetizing section. When we finished, it was four o'clock, and His Eminence signaled it was time for our mid-afternoon break. As usual, there was a stampede of young monks hustling through the aisles to get outside and run around. The Westerners and older monks waited for His Eminence and the other teachers to exit room before leaving the shrine hall. (In the West we'd all wait for the teacher to leave, but allowances are made for young people in this context.) When we finally got out of the shrine room for the break, we saw a wide circle of three hundred red-robed monks surrounding an Indian television crew in the courtyard. In the center of the circle stood a travel reporter recommending that people to come to visit the monastery.

### A Talk By His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche

This is an edited transcript of Jigme Rinpoche's oral translation of a talk given by His Eminence at the conclusion of the Mahayoga empowerments of the Rinchen Terdzö.

It is important to understand that what abhisheka does is ripen our mindstream and the state of our body, speech, and mind altogether. What does an unripened mindstream mean? An unripened mindstream is our ordinary state, which is very hard, very arrogant, and very difficult, like infertile, very hard soil. Over time, over the days [of the Rinchen Terdzö], the abhishekas pour into the mindstream so that it becomes more soft, gentle, and transformed, so that we are able to sow the crop and reach the fruition of enlightenment rapidly, without any obstacles. Basically, we are taking our mindset or mindstream, our rough state or condition, and making it more soft, gentle, and workable. This happens not only due to the blessings of the gurus, but also through the power and strength of one's trust and devotion.

One of the most difficult obstacles to this is pride and arrogance, the ego. One can see that ego is an inevitable part of everyone; you can even see a child displaying ego. The ego has always brought us into unfortunate states, into problems, into pain and



suffering, rather than doing any good. So it is important that we try to bring our ego down by transforming it with the power of devotion and trust. Then, over time, the blessing of the abhishekas will help us to go through further transformation.

Back in Tibet, when I was receiving the Rinchen Terdzö from Trungpa Rinpoche, his chöpon, the one who handles the mandala set up, used to come and see me often. He used to come by just to chat and talk. The chöpon said that he had seen a marked change in the monks of Surmang [in those years]. He told me how the monks of Surmang used to be quite arrogant, quite unruly, full of ego, and not really humble. But the monks changed once Khenpo Gangshar was sent there as a tutor and teacher at the request of Trungpa Rinpoche. Like Trungpa Rinpoche, Khenpo Gangshar was a student of Shechen Kongtrül. Also, he was Shechen Kongtrül's nephew. Both Shechen Kongtrül and Khenpo Gangshar were regarded as having accomplished the fourth and highest stage accomplishment of dzogchen.

The reason the chöpon said Khenpo Gangshar had brought a change to Surmang was that when the chöpon [last] returned to monastery, he found it had totally changed. It had become much more quiet. The monks had become much more gentle, and more silent, and it seemed that everyone was observing their own minds a lot. The chöpon found a big change in Surmang. This is what I was told, and I believe this happened due to the power of the teaching, the teacher, and also, most importantly, due to the power and practice of devotion.

When I received the empowerments from Trungpa Rinpoche, I never had the feeling of seeing him as just an ordinary person even for one instant. I have always believed in and been able to see through pure vision, pure perception, which is essential on the path of tantrayana. Even though sometimes Trungpa Rinpoche would sleep on the throne during the abhishekas, I never had ordinary feelings about him. I always felt that when he was sleeping he was not in this world, but was communicating with numerous pure realms and deities and so forth. I never saw him in an ordinary way, even for one second. I always felt that when he taught, a lively, living bodhisattva was giving all the precious teachings and empowerments. This is because I know what pure vision means; I have felt it myself, I have experienced it myself.

When pure vision actually enters into you, you are moved by the sheer power of purity, the sheer power of the wholesomeness of the blessing deities, and then your body begins to shiver, you begin to have tears. But these tears are not coming because you have pain, or because you have suffering; they are coming out of the power of the

purity and because you are so moved by the deity that you come into contact with this whole world of pure phenomena.

When you come into contact with pure phenomena, what happens is that impure perception, impure vision, stops. When there is no more impure vision, when impure perceptions stop, that is exactly the mind of the buddha, the mind of enlightenment. The only difference is that after enlightenment the buddhas are never separate from that, they never look away from that state of mind. Ordinarily, beings can look away from that mind; they can have a glimpse of it but look away from it. That's the only difference. Besides that, there is no real big difference.

I would like to say once again to everybody to put the focus back on devotion, back to keeping samaya. Otherwise, even if there is a real buddha in front of us, it will be just like in the time of Shakyamuni when his own nephew and student, the gelong Legpe Karma, never really saw anything good in the Buddha even though he spent a great many years with him. He never saw any good quality in the Buddha and that was his loss. Without having real devotion, trust, and observance of one's own mind and samaya, it is actually impossible to see the full qualities of the lamas and the deities. Therefore I want to ask you all once again not to forget that the purpose of the abhishekas here is to help us ripen our heart, our mindstream, our being, into a soft and gentle nature so that then we can actually use our mindstreams to become enlightened, possibly in this very lifetime, or at least to produce better causes and conditions to reach enlightenment in future lives, and most importantly to develop compassion for all beings.

The way that your practice will go well is when you stop caring so much for this life alone. When your whole focus is on this life alone, you forget the next lives. For the real practitioner, the next lives are more important than this life. When everybody just sees, works and thinks only of this life, enlightenment will not be accomplished. Every practitioner of the past has in fact reached enlightenment because they cared for and was concerned about—they understood the implication of—the next lives. For this reason observe the causes and conditions of karma well. Do please remind yourself about these things. Then they will definitely produce a real, good practitioner. At the same time, continue to do all the mantras I entrusted all of you to accumulate. This is my advice.



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr



## THE RINCHEN TERDZÖ: ANUYOGA AND THE ARRIVAL OF THE NEW YEAR

Arrivals And Departures

February 22nd



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

Three Padma Ling sangha members returned for a second visit to the Rinchen Terdzö. Return visits have been a theme for the students of Namkha Drimed Rinpoche and Jigme Rinpoche during the program. Given how removed we were from almost everywhere else, such dedication was inspiring. The most recent returnees arrived two days ago. They were Heinz Buhofer, Marcus Ramirez, and Christian Zimmerhäckel, who all stayed through the New Year.

There was an influx of arrivals from Shambhala too. Bodhi Gerfen and Mariah Simonton came a few days ago. They were followed a day or two later by Dorothée Rosen, her daughters Natalie and Emma, and Alana Zeigler. President Richard Reoch and Noedup Rongae, the distinguished thangka painter whom we met in Delhi on the way to Orissa, arrived during the break in this afternoon's empowerments. All the new guests came to join the Losar celebrations and participate in the conclusion of the Rinchen Terdzö. The guesthouse dining room turned into a lively place to eat. So many fresh faces were at first a bit of a shock to those of us who'd been in Orissa nearly three months. At the same time, friends were a reminder that there was a big world out there waiting for us.

Nickolai Almerov and his girlfriend Luda departed for Russia this evening. Their departure, like the departures of others who left before the end, was tremendously sad. Nickolai and Luda were a steady presence in the Western section of the shrine room, and Nickolai was a big help to everyone through his expert knowledge of Tibetan and of the dharma in general. Immediately preceding their nighttime departure, Nickolai gave a twenty-minute synopsis of the last talk by Namkha Drimed Rinpoche. We enjoyed the benefit of his translation skills and amazingly detailed memory up to the very last minute.

Today we received all the empowerments in the anuyoga section of the Rinchen Terdzö. It was the smallest section in the collection. That somehow made the abhishekas very poignant. Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche explained that his *Sadhana Of Mahamudra* is a combination of anuyoga and atiyoga. Sometimes anuyoga is described as the method to purify passion, mahayoga is the method to purify aggression, and atiyoga is the method to purify delusion. Passion, aggression, and delusion are known as the three poisons, the three core negative emotional states that perpetuate our suffering.

Gutor

February 23rd



Photograph by Walker Blaine

During lunch today, a little crowd in the dining room asked Noedup Rongae many questions about his life, thangka painting, and how he came to be a student of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. Noedup told some stories about his uncle, a monk in the travelling party of Khamtrül Rinpoche who was escaping from Tibet in the late 1950's. Khamtrül Rinpoche was one of the great teachers of his era, and he made a lasting

impression on the Westerners who studied with him in the early 1970s. During his departure for India, Khamtrül Rinpoche stopped at Yak Gompa to visit with Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche during the Rinchen Terdzö. Noedup said that the Vidyadhara conscripted his uncle to stay on at Yak Gompa and made him the head chöpon for the empowerments. Noedup's uncle was the 'old chöpon' mentioned in *Born In Tibet*, and also the chöpon mentioned by His Eminence in the talk two days ago.

Noedup also gave us an update on the Rigden Lineage Tree thangka. The canvas had been stretched and the initial sketches were being traced on it in the studios of the Shambhala School of Thangka Painting in Menali, North India. Noedup said there would be over 100 figures in the final painting, which will take about two years to complete. The canvas, now on



a special cylindrical frame built to accommodate up to six painters working on it at once, is 6 feet wide by 9 feet high. When it is mounted on brocade, the *thangka* itself will be about 10 feet by 18 feet.

In the mid-afternoon I walked to the monastery to attend the finale of *gutor*, the end of year practices to disperse accumulated negative karma. I didn't know what to expect. At first, I wasn't sure there



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

were going to be lama dances at all. I arrived to find the huge monastery courtyard almost entirely deserted. Kristine McCutcheon and some monks were setting up dignitary seating on the monastery porch, but otherwise there was no one to be found. However, His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, Jigme Rinpoche, and his sister the Sakyong Wangmo soon arrived and settled into their places. Khandro Chime, Semo Sonam, Semo Pede, various *khenpos*, President Reoch, and the other dignitaries arrived in the following minutes. As if timing things perfectly, Her Grace Wendy Friedman, one of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's *sangyum* or heart consorts, arrived in the courtyard with her husband Ben Fong at the very start of the dances. Wendy and Ben had landed in Bhubaneswar in the middle of the previous night, slept one hour, and took a six-hour jeep ride in order to arrive as quickly as possible.

After some commotion around the shrine room doors and the stairwell to the upper floors of the monastery, horns began blaring from the rooftop Gesar shrine room where the intensive practice leading up to *gutor* had taken place. Then a long procession of monks with *gyalings*, thundering drums, and the deep voiced 9-foot long horns (young monks carried the far ends of these trumpets) made their way down from the roof. Quite quickly, the entire population of 400 monks stood in a huge circle in the courtyard. Lay people gradually filled the perimeter and sat on the edge of the courtyard gardens.

Then the two masters for the dances, Lhunpo Rinpoche and Tulku Kunkyab Rinpoche, emerged from the main shrine room doors. They wore colorful brocaded costumes to embody the wrathful deities, and they had on wide-brimmed black hats decorated with skulls and flames. Both Rinpoches danced from the shrine room doors to their place at the far end of the courtyard. After some introductory liturgies to a booming drumbeat, the two masters seated themselves facing the monastery.

This was probably the fifth time I have witnessed lama dancing, and it was one of the



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

most engaging. This was partially because the dances were quite different from one another (not always the case in lama dancing) and partially because of the program's length, less than an hour altogether. There were five short dances altogether. Probably five dances were the most those new to the tradition could handle—most lama dancing is pretty slow, the dancers are concentrating on internal visualizations. Many lama

dances take half a day or more; Surmang's Chakrasamvara dances take three days from start to finish.

Shortly after the two masters were seated, two skeletons popped out of the shrine room doorway. Between them they carried a bright red torma on small plank. After the skeletons' dance, we saw a pair of dancing garudas, a dancing deer, and finally a large dance with 14 lamas, all dressed as wrathful deities like the dance masters, all in brocade with black hats. The singing and drumming were exhilarating, and the dances were wonderful to behold.

After the ceremonies in the courtyard concluded, a bulging torma representing the purification of the negativities from the previous year was carried from the monastery grounds to the edge of the village. The torma probably weighed 100 pounds and was carried on the shoulders of four brawny laymen. The lamas led the procession with the torma. All the monks and most of the Tibetan community followed them. Once at our destination, a dusty crossroads near a fallow cornfield, more rituals ensued. After a final, spirited lama dance offered by Lhunpo Rinpoche, the torma was offered into a small bonfire. Afterwards, aspirations for peace and happiness in the world were performed back at the monastery.

## Neutral Day

February 24th

Unlike in the West, New Year's Eve is not a time for partying in the Tibetan world. After the ten days of practice leading up to the New Year comes the neutral day, a day that is neither negative nor positive in terms of particular activities being karmically better or worse. Neutral day is a time to keep things simple and literally 'clean house' like the monks who scrubbed windows and tidied their rooms this morning. After the neutral day comes Losar, the time for festivities and a positive beginning after purifying and cleaning up one's world.

Many of us spent part of the neutral day morning folding *khatas*, the white silk scarves



that would be needed for making offerings during Losar. It is the Tibetan custom to offer a khata, a symbol of pure intention, to lamas, dignitaries, and friends at auspicious times such as the New Year, a greeting or departure, or at the conclusion of a teaching event. For Westerners deep in the Tibetan world, the Losar khatas in Orissa presented a bit of a challenge. One estimate was that we'd need 22 khatas each. Cutting and folding 44 khatas (which come in neat packets of four, uncut) took Patricia and me more than an hour and a half.

At times like Losar, it is customary to make a monetary offering with the khata that one gives to a teacher. In light of the number of khatas we were preparing for the New Year, the presence of this tradition brought up a host questions such as: how much, to whom, and the ubiquitous question of why. From a standard Western viewpoint, everyone in the community making 22 separate monetary offerings on the New Year or at the end of a major program sounded excessive. After some research, the number declined to a slightly more reasonable-sounding 15 monetary offerings. The number dropped because we learned a monetary offering wasn't absolutely necessary during the early morning Gesar puja to be held at the Ripa Ladrang; we would see His Eminence and the other teachers a few hours later in the main shrine room at the formal Losar practice.

15 offerings still sounded like a lot. Fortunately, a friend who'd spent more time in the Tibetan community taught us the sensible approach to setting up offerings on occasions like these. The best way to start was to look at the total amount of money one had to offer, and then to divide that money into three piles, which were then apportioned to separate envelopes before going to the monastery. The first pile, the largest single offering, would be put into an envelope for the main teacher, in this case, His Eminence. The second pile was to be divided equally among the envelopes for the other rinpoches in the group. The third pile was for offerings to be divided among the envelopes for the khenpos, the lamas who were not rinpoches, and all the other dignitaries. The second set of offerings got slightly more money per envelope than the third set. One apportioned the money according to that scheme and made sure to have some spare envelopes and cash on hand just in case. Also, one might offer a little extra money in the envelope for a teacher or dignitary one had a connection with.

The list of rinpoches we made offerings to at Losar included Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, Jigme Rinpoche, Lhunpo Rinpoche, Tulku Kunkyang Rinpoche, and, of course, the Sakyong Wangmo. The list of lamas, khenpos, and dignitaries included His Eminence's wife, Khandro Chime Drolkar, and Semo Pede and Semo Sonam, the other two daughters of His Eminence in Orissa for Losar. At major events, it is also customary to make offerings at the statues of the Buddha, Padmasambhava, and so forth, as well as at the throne of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Offerings made to the Buddha, Padmasambhava, and images of other lineage figures were cycled back to the monastery. The offerings to the Dalai Lama were sent to His Holiness

in Dharamsala. It all sounded crazy from a non-Tibetan standpoint, but when all was said and done, it was not so different from what a bursar did behind the scenes with offerings and program fees in the West.

A few of us spent end of the neutral day at the lakeside restaurant-shack having a beer. Monks were swimming in the late-afternoon sun while different water birds, small crows, and pigeons zipped this way and that over the water. The restaurant's proprietor and some of her helpers busily made *kabdze* (lit. mouth food) in a shaded outdoor kitchen under the trees in preparation for the New Year. Kabdze is fried dough, made either in thick twists or the tubular 'donkey ears' style. It is a traditional Losar food. Finely milled flour, though common in the modern world, was a rare culinary treat in Tibet.

Here is a post-script to yesterday's entry: In the middle of the lama dances I met a kind and cheerful man named Todd Chambers. He was a student of Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoche and Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal Rinpoche, known to many as 'The Khenpo Brothers'. Todd had followed the blog while on pilgrimage in India. He prevailed upon his family in Orissa to stop by the monastery so he could see His Eminence and the Sakyong, whom he has great admiration for. Todd stayed for a few dances before heading home before sundown in order to avoid a challenging nighttime drive through the elephant territory nearby.

### Losar: Shambhala Day

February 25th 2009, Year Of The Earth Ox



The Sakyong Wangmo with Esther Fraund and Maggie Smith  
Photograph by Walker Blaine

I was awaked at 4 A.M. by the sound of banging on the door of President Richard Reoch's room in the guesthouse. President Reoch was being roused to receive the information that we did not need be out of bed until 5 A.M. There had been a mistake in the Westerner's schedule. I found our bedroom was stiflingly hot because the fan stopped during a power failure that was to last late into the morning. When a knock was heard

outside our pitch-black room, I found the door almost impossible to open. It had been jammed itself shut on a thick Losar greeting card that had been shoved underneath it sometime after midnight. After I sweatily fought the door open six inches, the guesthouse manager's face appeared in the candlelight outside. "Happy Losar," he said with a smile and explained the change in schedule.

So began the year of the Earth Ox. It was a challenge to dress formally while wearing a headlamp in a hot room, but somehow it worked. There was something special about doing that when you knew the entire village was faced with the same situation. After a while, the Shambhala and Ripas sangha trickled out into the early morning darkness, using flashlights to walk to the Ripa Ladrang without stepping in cow dung. Everybody was saying delightedly, '*Tashi Deleg*,' (lit. Auspicious Goodness) the traditional New Year's greeting. Although I don't know if it is true, I've heard that Tashi Deleg was not a general salutation until the 1960s or 70s, when someone pointed out that there was no way to say 'good day' or something of the like in Tibetan. Before then, Tibetans usually greeted each other with statements such as, "Where have you come from?"

At the Ripa Ladrang, vigorous chanting, drumming, horns, and cymbals could be heard coming out the window to His Eminence's shrine room above the garden. In the garden, about a hundred lay Tibetans and Westerners were served chai, salted butter tea, and New Year's chang, in this case made from rice rather than barley. The Sakyong Wangmo and her sisters, Semo Sonam and Semo Pede, moved through the well-dressed crowd, greeting everyone with a smile and making them feel at home. Here and there people readied khatas to present to the lamas upstairs who had been performing a Gesar long-life practice since 2 A.M.. Some Tibetans arrived at the compound with offerings of fruit and kabdze. A steady line of people filed upstairs to the shrine room, then out a terrace door, and down another set of steps at the far end of the garden.

Inside the narrow shrine room, the walls rumbled with the voices of about a dozen lamas headed by Namkha Drimed Rinpoche and Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. Their two thrones were squeezed in on either side of a shrine at the far end of the room. Below them, against the left and right walls, a row of lamas sat in front of low tables facing each other. In between the lamas was a two-foot wide aisle filled with people gracefully trying to get to and from His Eminence and the Sakyong while offering khatas to everyone along the way. The lamas had their practice tables all but buried underneath a long, white cloud of khatas about eight inches high. The Sakyong gave me a big smile as he placed a khata over my neck. He and His Eminence looked very happy to be practicing first thing in the New Year.



Noedup Rongae, Theresa Laurie, and President Richard Reoch

Photograph by Walker Blaine



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

ties. We were told that if this had been an ordinary New Year, we'd have heard parties, dance music, and the explosions of demon-chasing fireworks throughout the Tibetan settlement for the next three days.

After a relaxed and cheerful breakfast in the guesthouse we made our way to the monastery for Losar morning practice. Almost everyone, lay people and monastics alike, waited in the shade of the monastery porch contemplating the intense heat and the white light of the sunshine. As word of the immanent arrival of His Eminence spread, the monks ran down to the courtyard to form two long lines with a wide space between them for His Eminence and the Sakyong to walk on their way to the shrine room stairs. All the monks held white khatas that gleamed in the sunlight, a pretty contrast to the red of their robes. Thonga, the canteen manager and proud father of a one week old baby, and a few other laymen waited near the shrine room door with a traditional painted stand of raw and ground roasted barley to be tossed into the air with auspicious prayers before entering the shrine room.



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

After visiting the teachers and returning to the garden it was time for a few more sips of chang or a taste of sweet chai. By then, the sun had fully risen and our eyes were opening to the day. While people were dressed according to the request by the Tibetan government to be subdued, all the ladies looked elegant in their dresses and simple chubas while the gentlemen were handsome and dignified in suit jackets and

The Tibetan New Year celebration at the monastery was a straightforward situation. Everyone made their first-of-the-year offerings of khatas and money to the various shrines, teachers, and dignitaries before sitting down again for salty butter tea and big bags of treats that included kadbze, fruit, and candy. The young monks dug into their treats quickly. After the formal tea offering, the monastics and those of us who read

Tibetan chanted through a variety of aspirations for the year, more positive seeds being sewn to start things well. At the end of an hour of a half long practice session, both Namkha Drimed Rinpoche and Jigme Rinpoche offered short talks to the monastics.



Afterwards, the Shambhala and Ripa sanghas met in the guesthouse lobby, which had been transformed into an impromptu assembly hall by President Reoch. After leading a short practice session, President Reoch played the recorded Shambhala Day addresses from Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche and the Sakyong Wangmo. The talk, oddly enough, started at about midnight Halifax time. Then, after a long, chatty luncheon almost everyone wandered back to his or her room for a good nap.

The final part of the first day of Losar in Orissa was a dinner party for the foreign guests, which was hosted by the Ripa family in the garden of the Ripa Ladrang. Several small tables were placed on the little lawn amidst the wide-leafed tropical plants. In typical Tibetan style, the guests were plied unceasingly with chang, fruit juice, and water during the banquet of momos, tandoori chicken, various local vegetable dishes, broth, extra-hot hot sauce, and a dessert of rice pudding. There were three head tables. The center table featured His Eminence, the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo, and their guests President Reoch, Noedup Rongae, and Heinz Buhofer. To their right sat Jigme Rinpoche and a new group of Russian guests. To the left sat Lhunpo Rinpoche, Tulku Kunkyang Rinpoche, Khandro Chime Drolkar, and some of their close friends.

The night was delightful and low key. There was no singing or dancing, but after His Eminence had retired for the evening, there was a long series of toasts. Kristine McCutcheon, who had been instructed by Richard Reoch to speak for five minutes straight, started this part of the evening. Such a long oration thoroughly broke the ice. Tulku Kunkyang gave a very sweet toast in English. We'd



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

have to say that the broad-voiced and cheerful Nepalese gardener at the Ripa Ladrang gave the most memorable toast of all. He animatedly described what it had been like for him to encounter the great variety of ants, insects, and other horticultural obstacles in Orissa while he experienced the blessings of the guru spread out to the community. In the end, everyone was tucked in bed by midnight, happy and content to have started the New Year in good form and good company.

Losar: Day Two

February 26th



Photograph by Walker Blaine

Losar is one of the most beloved times of year in the Tibetan community. During dinner tonight, friends described what it was like during the New Year celebrations two years ago. It sounded fantastic. Each of the five camps in the settlement put on

several performances of song and dance. All of this was done in an atmosphere of what sounded like continuous chang drinking. The chang I've had here tastes a lot like apple cider (or barley cider, said a couple of Europeans.) But Losar chang drinking isn't ordinary drinking. In most New Year celebrations, the chang servers sing traditional drinking songs, which are offerings to the three jewels, long-life aspirations, and other auspicious reasons to be drinking. Chang is seen as a long-life elixir. And—here's a twist—if one drinks before the song is over, one is obliged to finish the cup and accept another. During the wedding of the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo a few years ago, this requirement was challenging for some Westerners to follow because the songs were sung in Tibetan and because they were compelled to drink more and more chang.

Contemplating such festivities I was a little disappointed not to see a traditional Losar celebration even though I knew it was good we were keeping things simple in order to connect to the suffering in Tibet. Very few communities in the world could abandon a major part of any holiday en masse like this. May the difficulties in Tibet and other places be swiftly pacified for the benefit of all beings.

Tonight's dinner was held under the stars on the little lawn outside the guesthouse. We gathered for a second celebratory evening to honor the core staff of the Rinchen Terdzö. Jigme Rinpoche, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, Lhunpo Rinpoche, and Tulku Kunkyab Rinpoche sat at two head tables while the rest of us enjoyed dinner at little tables fanned out on the grass. As it was a mixed event, monastics and lay people, there was no chang. This was due to the presence of monastics at the event and the fact that the party was next door to the monastery. The menu featured lots of soda and momos, Tibetan dumplings.

At the end of the meal, our host for the evening, Jigme Rinpoche, stood up and described the enormous amount of work it had taken to support the Rinchen Terdzö. He asked the senior officials stand up by one by one to receive our recognition. Among the core monastic helpers were the khenpos (very learned philosophical teachers), a treasured lama who held the almost extinct Taksham lineage of secret practice instructions, the chant leaders, and the gekos (monastic disciplinarians). The lay support staff included the monastery manager, the finance officer, the bursar, the nurse, and the town trip driver, who got a lot of applause along with the Jigme, the guesthouse manager.

So much came together to create the environment for the empowerments. Over the months since we arrived, Jigme Rinpoche and Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche have said time and again that it is difficult and rare for something like the Rinchen Terdzö to happen. Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche once said that one of his greatest achievements in the West was the annual three-month Vajradhatu seminary. In the modern world, even in Asia, it is increasingly difficult to create gatherings like these. Such things only happen through a combination of the aspirations and blessings of the teachers and the merit and effort of the students.

I would like to call your attention to two websites. The first is the regularly updated audio-visual page for the Shambhala community. Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche's recorded Shambhala Day address, his words for the New Year for the New Year from the Rinchen Terdzö, along with those of the Sakyong Wangmo Dechen Choying Sangmo, are posted there. The Sakyong's address starts with a description of the Rinchen Terdzö. It also includes his remarks about the relationship between contemplative practice and the anxiety we face in a world of crisis and uncertainty. There are many other treats on this website, including a movie of the events in Orissa.

<http://www.shambhala.org/community/video.php>

The second website is the Shambhala Times, the web magazine for the Shambhala community that was launched on Shambhala Day. Holly Gayley, one of the editors of the Shambhala Times, and Cameron Wenaus, the web architect, were extraordinarily helpful creating and maintaining this blog. They provided a lot of advice and technical know-how along with designing and hosting the blogsite. Please drop into the Shambhala Times for a visit.

<http://www.shambhalatimes.org/>



## Losar: Day Three

February 27th

On the third day of Losar, many of the Western students visited the family residence of Kaling, the Sakyong Wangmo's close friend and kusung. The visit started with the Western guests performing the long lhasang ceremony under the trees in front of the small main house. The lhasang was easy to perform because Kaling's family had their own outdoor lhasang 'oven', a common feature in the Tibetan community. We did the practice complete with drum and cymbals and Kaling's extended family stood in a circle with us as we practiced in English. The occasion was the cleansing and purification of a new house. After chanting the warrior's cry and wafting juniper smoke in every room of the still under-construction building, we retired to the new front porch for a delicious curry lunch.

This morning we learned the empowerments would resume tomorrow, a day early. The news came as a delight to everyone, particularly the people who've been here from the start. It had been a bit strange to suddenly stop the Rinchen Terdzö. There were rumors that the empowerments might go a day longer than expected, meaning that we would conclude on the 5th of March. In the West, such shifty schedules would be a great source of frustration. It was sad to see several people leave because of travel plans that didn't anticipate going past Losar, but the overall attitude, even for those departing, was one of joy that His Eminence was teaching and that the lineage of the marvelous treasury of termas would continue.



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr



## THE RINCHEN TERDZÖ: ATIYOGA AND THE CONCLUSION OF THE CEREMONIES

Dzogchen, Ngöndro, A Few Days Missed

February 28th-March 3rd



Photograph by Walker Blaine

After three days off for the Tibetan New Year, the Rinchen Terdzö resumed for the last of the three major sections of empowerments, the empowerments of dzogchen. Dzogchen, also known as atiyoga, is the ultimate, final stage of practice in the Nyingma tradition. The atiyoga is already quite famous in the West. There are many books about it, far more books than have been published on mahayoga and

anuyoga. Besides being the highest instructions, the dzogchen teachings are popular in the West because its practices are not elaborate; there are not a lot of complex visualizations or yogic austerities to do. Dzogchen is said to be difficult to accomplish because the instructions are subtle and direct, and the fruition, what we practice to achieve, cannot be put into words.

The atiyoga section of the Rinchen Terdzö contains eighty or ninety empowerments. Although there were several general categories, three important subdivisions were the empowerments and special instructions coming from Padmasambhava, Vimalamitra, and

Vairochana. All three of these great masters created termas to be discovered in later times. The empowerments for these sections were given in groups according to the individual teachers. After them came empowerments combining the three masters' traditions into one.

Some of these empowerments occurred during the time Patricia and I spent at the clinic, so I can't say so much about them.<sup>13</sup> It was sad to miss a few of the ultimate empowerments of the Rinchen Terdzö. Although not so much the case in modern times, dzogchen was originally taught in strict secrecy, so perhaps it's all well and good that there's not so much for me to say about dzogchen in this book. Of the empowerments we did attend, it was clear there were more descriptions of mind and meditation as opposed to the elaborate ritual displays that we were used to seeing in the earlier sections of the Rinchen Terdzö.

Because Tibetan tradition puts importance on doing things in an astrologically harmonious way, it was decided to formally end the Rinchen Terdzö on the auspicious 8th day of the New Year, the 4th of March. However, the dzogchen empowerments could not be completed at that point, so some of the empowerments were held back to be bestowed on the 5th and 6th. These empowerments were from the less commonly practiced dzogchen cycles. They included empowerments for retreats done in total darkness, and a cycle of empowerments from termas discovered by Ratna Lingpa.

Following Patricia and my return from the clinic on morning of the 3rd, I visited the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo. They were in good spirits, very concerned about how Patricia was doing, and glad to know she was ok. Patricia and I had received so many good wishes, prayers, and gifts from teachers and friends that Patricia joked that it was worth getting sick for. On the night of the 3rd, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche gave Patricia and me the protection cords he'd received during the dzogchen empowerments while we were gone.

A couple of points caught my attention during the conversation with Their Majesties. Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche said that people in the Tibetan community had come to thank him for requesting His Eminence to bestow the Rinchen Terdzö. People said they had no idea of the breadth of teachings and empowerments that His Eminence carried. This did not surprise me because Namkha Drimed Rinpoche is remarkably humble and quiet about his activities. At the same time, it revealed there's a lot more to learn about our teachers and the Tibetan world.

The second point that struck me came when The Sakyong Wangmo said that the people

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<sup>13</sup> During the last part of the Rinchen Terdzö, I was unable to write daily reports about the dzogchen empowerments. This was due to the misfortune of Patricia Kirigin contracting a serious stomach virus. The illness put her in a local clinic for three nights. I accompanied her as boyfriend, watchdog, and general helper. We attended the dzogchen section on the 28th of February and joined in again partway through the 3rd of March. Patricia got well quickly and returned to the West in good health.

who had not finished their ngöndro practice had never before been asked to leave the shrine room during empowerments from His Eminence. Up until the Rinchen Terdzö, the empowerments His Eminence had given to the general community tended to be short, and he made no distinctions about who could stay. Being asked to leave the shrine room came as a bit of a shock to some people in the lay community.

Apparently, many lay people had received ngöndro but never completed it. The Sakyong Wangmo said that the situation at the Rinchen Terdzö inspired people to get back to finishing their practices. Aside from the Sakyong, members of the Ripa family, and tantric practitioners wearing robes, there were more Westerners than lay Tibetans at the restricted empowerments. I think the number of Westerners remaining for the empowerments must have encouraged people's aspiration to complete ngöndro. It reminded me of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's remark that people from the West would eventually travel to Asia to teach the dharma.

Tomorrow, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche and Lhunpo Rinpoche will be enthroned as lineage holders during the formal conclusion of the Rinchen Terdzö. The ceremonies will be conferred according to Rigdzin Demtruchen's terma, *The Blazing Jewel Of Sovereignty*, an empowerment from the renowned 18-volume *Lama Gongdu* discovered by Sangye Lingpa, and the empowerment for a popular long-life practice contained a terma discovered by Ratna Lingpa. The Ratna Lingpa empowerment will include the final feast at the Rinchen Terdzö. For many, this day will mark the end of their time here in Orissa.

## The Ceremonial Conclusion Of The Rinchen Terdzö

March 4th

After an early breakfast, the Western students met with Shambhala's president, the indefatigably cheerful Richard Reoch. President Reoch had just come from a meeting with the Sakyong. He carried a list of many offerings to be given to His Eminence during the final ceremonies. In gratitude for the empowerments, His Eminence would receive a variety of presents from both the Westerners and the Tibetans at the



Photograph by Walker Blaine

event. We spent a good twenty minutes working out the order of the long line of Western students who'd carry the offerings of silver vases, kapalas, and kilas, and a set of the eight auspicious symbols leafed in gold.



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

enough room to walk through the veranda. 1400 people came for the enthronements and concluding celebrations.

Inside the shrine room, two additional thrones were set up by the time we arrived in the morning. As we waited for events to begin, the Rinchen Terdzö empowerment shrine slowly became hidden behind a slowly growing pile of bags of food individually packaged for everyone coming to the final feast. With crowds of this size, it is easier to pass out all the feast food at once rather serving each item separately as is sometimes done in the West. While we waited for His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche and Lhunpo Rinpoche to arrive, the Sakyong Wangmo entered the room in the light green silk chuba she wore last year at her enthronement. During the enthronement itself she quietly donned the light red Yeshe Tsogyal cape embroidered with chrysanthemums. Her Majesty looked particularly regal and radiant.

After all was readied in the shrine room, the three empowerments of the day began. We started with *The Blazing Jewel Of Sovereignty*, the ritual used to confirm a dharma king. This empowerment was conferred at least three times on Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, once when he received the Rinchen Terdzö from Shechen Kongtrül Rinpoche, and twice from His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. The Vidyadhara was about eight years old the first time he received the empowerment from Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (presumably to confirm his rulership of the area around Surmang in Nangchen). He received the empowerment from Khyentse Rinpoche the second time was when he was enthroned as the Sakyong of Shambhala. The event occurred in Boulder, Colorado in 1982. His Holiness Penor Rinpoche performed same empowerment in Halifax, Nova Scotia when he enthroned Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche as Sakyong of Shambhala in 1995, and the Sakyong received *The Blazing Jewel of Sovereignty* again in 2010 during the tenshuk ceremony in Halifax, Nova Scotia.



The empowerment for *The Blazing Jewel Of Sovereignty* is simple and elegant. After the master performs the preliminary practices, the ceremony begins with the recipient sitting in a chair in front of the master. Gradually, as the empowerment progresses, the future lineage holder is gradually clothed as a sovereign of the dharma and brought to the throne wearing clothing much like the robes and boots worn by Padmasambhava. After assuming the throne, the new dharma monarch receives the lotus crown and the many offerings befitting a king or queen of dharma.

It was a magical day. Everyone was formally dressed for the occasion, especially the Tibetans. While it's been normal to see the Tibetan women wearing chubas and colorful aprons during the empowerments, this was the first time I saw many laymen wearing traditional attire, dignified chubas and the occasional brocade and fur (or fake fur)



Photograph by Laura Chenoweth

winter hat. Following the enthronement, women from the five Tibetan camps served butter-tea and rice cooked with almonds and raisins to the entire assembly.

After the tea break, several formal mandala offerings and long life supplications were made to the two new lineage holders. First, the Ripa Ladrang and His Eminence's monasteries in India and Nepal made offerings and supplications to the Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. Then, the two monasteries made mandala offerings and supplications to Lhunpo Rinpoche. Finally both monasteries made mandala offerings supplications to the Sakyong Wangmo, Dechen Choying Sangmo.

Following the enthronement, His Eminence began a long textual empowerment. This abhisheka was from the well-known terma cycle called the *Lama Gongdu* or the *Union Of All The Gurus* discovered by the tertön Sangye Lingpa. The empowerment presented every aspect of the path from its entry leading up to the final section of dzogchen and it had a long section of reading transmission as part of the liturgy.

Following this, the chief khenpo of the monastery, Khenpo Pema Tenpel, read a lengthy, ceremonious, and traditionally appropriate description of how the dharma came to Tibet, how



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

the lineage of the Rinchen Terdzö came to us in the present day, the lineage of His Eminence, and the lineage of the two chief recipients of the Rinchen Terdzö. The text of this description, actually an extended praise read by Khenpo Pema Tenpel, was taped together like a scroll that seemed to be at least twenty feet long.

After a formal expression of gratitude to His Eminence made by President Reoch on behalf of the entire Shambhala community, offerings were made to Lhunpo Rinpoche in thanks for the reading transmission of the Rinchen Terdzö. Following this there were no less than 13 organizations making individual offerings to His Eminence. The procession of monks and lay people carrying texts, grain, medicines, carpets, and other expressions of gratitude took nearly an hour. Then, a little behind schedule, we took a break for a huge

and delicious Indian lunch prepared by the monastery for all the guests present at the event.

Following lunch came the final long-life empowerment, which ended with a blessing line that lasted three or four hours. This was the time for personal offerings to the teachers from everyone in the community. The monastery was clever about this in terms of crowd control. They barred the door to the shrine room shut so that all 700 or 800 of us inside could move through the line before the next 700 or 800 people were let through. During this time, everybody was able to pass before His Eminence, the Sakyong, Lhunpo Rinpoche, Jigme Rinpoche, and Tulku Kunkyang Rinpoche. By the time I got to the thrones, all the teachers were all seated behind high piles of white khatas and envelopes from the community. At the end of the row of thrones, at the base of the stage, stood various monastic officials and President Reoch. They passed out protection cords, commemorative books in Tibetan, and other keepsakes to mark the ceremonial end to the empowerments.

Often it is said that there is no way to really repay the kindness of the teacher, that there's no way to show adequate thanks to a person who shows you the path and the genuine truth of reality. It seemed that even with all the formal praises and the offerings, and the line of gifts that took dozens of people nearly an hour to give, we had not done justice to what His

Eminence had given us. He spent his entire life training and meditating to benefit others, and during the three months of the Rinchen Terdzö he unreservedly gave every single moment of his time and heart to the Sakyong and everyone assembled, never thinking of himself. His kindness and generosity continues to amaze me. May his life be long and healthy, and may all his wishes be fulfilled.

## The Conclusion After The Conclusion

March 5th-6th

The last days in Orissa were very hot. The Indian heat starts on the eastern coast in March and slowly moves westward toward Delhi and Mumbai before ending with the summer's monsoons. News reports said it was over 40 Celsius, or 104 Fahrenheit, in the coastal city of Bhubaneswar earlier in the week. During the final days in Orissa, we became used to the afternoon wind blowing through shrine room like hot air spiking out of a dryer exhaust vent.

After the closing ceremonies on the 4th, most of the Tibetan lay community attending the empowerments departed, but about 20 or 30 remained with the monastics and the Westerners who weren't forced to leave by obligations elsewhere or frozen return flight tickets. As I sat in the more quiet and peaceful shrine room, I was struck with a feeling of affection and love. Things were dissolving and at the same time there was such appreciation for and by everyone. During the final days everyone seemed to glow. The extra days of empowerments gave us some time to gently let go. There was the time and space to take one last long look.



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

As things wound down, the monastery slipped into a different daily routine, probably the closest thing to 'normal' that such an institution can have. The young monks had more room to run around in during the breaks, and everyone seemed more relaxed. I was pleased to see a Tibetan layman, the gardener, playfully spraying a hose at a couple of red-robed boys in the mid-day heat. It felt much like the end of a major seminary in the West—a mixture of sadness at the impermanence of a wondrous world and relief at the end of a great effort.

The Sakyong was very generous with his time at the end of the Rinchen Terdzö and I was able to meet with him twice more before our departure. He said that it was rare to see a Tibetan settlement in such a cohesive situation as it had been during the Rinchen Terdzö and





Photograph by Walker Blaine

the final empowerments. Often, in larger communities, when big events happen at one monastery there are still other activities happening at the neighboring monasteries. However, in Orissa everyone joined together. He said that the Rinchen Terdzö would have a big effect later; people had never seen anything like it in Orissa before.

The last session of empowerments was quite poignant. Everything was the last: the last time we took refuge with Eminence, the last taste of saffron water, the last censer brought around by the chöpon. In the end, after we'd dedicated the merit and finished the closing chants, His Eminence simply stood up and left the shrine room, smiling as he glanced at everyone on the way to the door. He gave us a wave goodbye as he did so often throughout our time together. It was as though everything had come together and then was gone like a dream; there was no reason to hang on, even if it was sad to finally say goodbye.

The Rinchen Terdzö gave a deep glimpse into the Tibetan culture and community. While standing in the final blessing line during the concluding ceremonies on March 4th, I noticed a woman with a tiny newborn baby in her arms. I asked her if Thonga, the canteen manager, was the father and she replied it was different child. The entire wheel of life proceeded around the Rinchen Terdzö, with babies being born and family members passing away during the three months of ceremonies. That wheel of life, along with the blessings of practice and devotion to the dharma, brought the Rinchen Terdzö into this modern world. May its practices and wisdom nurture not only the East, but also the West for many centuries to come.



The Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo after the final empowerments.  
Photograph by Walker Blaine



## ESSAYS AND REFLECTIONS



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

The following are four essays written after the Rinchen Terdzö. The first is a description of the Rinchen Terdzö in terms of the symbolism of The Great Stupa Of Dharmakaya at Shambhala Mountain Center. This essay gives a context to see the event in terms of its interrelationship with the Shambhala teachings, the vajrayana, and the Buddhist path in general. The second essay examines the relationship between rulership, enlightened society, and the Rinchen Terdzö. The third is an examination of the tertön, the tertön's successor, and the Shambhala terma tradition. The final essay is made of personal reflections about the event.

### The Great Stupa Of Dharmakaya And The Rinchen Terdzö

The symbolism of The Great Stupa Of Dharmakaya, the Buddhist monument at Shambhala Mountain Center that commemorates the Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, is a way to understand the context for the Rinchen Terdzö in Shambhala. The general Buddhist path, the vajrayana traditions of Buddhism, and the Shambhala terma are all neatly brought together in the symbolism of the stupa. A stupa is a living architectural representation of the Buddha, of the path, and of the awakened state of mind within us all. The form of a stupa is designed to symbolize the form of the Buddha in seated meditation on a throne. The exterior details of a stupa represent the various stages of the path—from initially meeting the dharma, to developing a stable mind of practice, to finally realizing the complete enlightenment of a



The Great Stupa Of Dharmakaya  
Photograph by Walker Blaine

buddha. This is one reason why seeing a stupa can be profound and liberating.

After Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche passed away in 1987, His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, who was both one of the Vidyadhara's main teachers and a close friend, oversaw the planning of The Great Stupa Of Dharmakaya. The stupa is part of a larger vision to

build stupas at eight major Shambhala centers. These eight stupas are to follow a particular motif, the eight deeds of the Buddha, the eight most important occurrences in the Buddha's life. The Great Stupa Of Dharmakaya, is a Descent From Heaven stupa. It depicts the moment when the Buddha returned to this world after spending three months in a celestial realm teaching the dharma to his mother, Queen Maya, who passed away one week after the Buddha's birth.

Inside, The Great Stupa Of Dharmakaya has three levels. These present the Buddhist path and practice from the perspective of the Shambhala teachings within the greater framework of tantric Buddhism. One of the main features of the first floor of the stupa is an eighteen-foot tall statue of the Buddha teaching the dharma. Painted on the ceiling is the mandala of Kalachakra, the Buddha's last and most detailed presentation tantra. The Buddha taught the Kalachakra tantra to King Dawa Sangpo, the first of the seven dharmarajas or dharma sovereigns of Shambhala. These seven preceded the 25 Rigdens, the universal sovereigns who are central figures in the Kalachakra tantra.

While the teachings of the Kalachakra are the most detailed presentation of vajrayana practice found in the tantras, it is traditional that the empowerments for these practices are offered publically to anyone who'd like to receive them. Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche asked the Very Venerable Kalu Rinpoche to bestow the Kalachakra empowerment on the Shambhala community in 1986. His Holiness Pema Norbu Rinpoche gave the Kalachakra to Shambhala in 1995 when he enthroned the current Sakyong.

The first floor of the stupa represents the general dharma tradition of the Buddha and the entrance to the esoteric path, the Kalachakra, which is closely connected to the Shambhala



teachings. The first level also represents the nirmanakaya aspect of buddhahood, a buddha's compassionate manifestation in this world.

The second floor of the stupa houses a three-dimensional representation of the mandala of Chakrasamvara, one of the main yidams of the Sarma or New Ones, the Buddhist traditions that arrived in Tibet after the Nyingma or Early Ones. Chakrasamvara is a major practice of the Kagyü lineage, the Sarma practice tradition that Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche upheld along with the Nyingma. It is also one of most important practice traditions maintained at Surmang Dütsi Til, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's home monastery in Tibet. The second floor of the great stupa represents the Sarma traditions as well as the sambhogakaya aspect of buddhahood, the radiant display of the mind of wisdom. The difference between this and the first floor of the stupa is that the sambhogakaya is related with mind's energetic display rather than something visible in everyday life. The sambhogakaya is experienced through meditative realization, whereas a nirmanakaya—the form of a Buddha, a statue, or a realized teacher—is perceivable in the everyday world.



The Buddha, first level of The Great Stupa  
Photograph by Walker Blaine

The uppermost level of the stupa is home to a statue of Vajrasattva, the transcendent buddha who is the union of all yidams. Vajrasattva is often the presenter of the Nyingma tantras. The third floor of the stupa represents the Nyingma lineage teachings, the original Buddhist tradition in Tibet, and it also represents the essential, ungraspable aspect of the mind of Buddhahood, the dharmakaya. Above Vajrasattva, painted on the interior vault at the base of the spire of the stupa, are paintings of the eight vidyadharas, the eight realized Indian teachers who taught the mahayoga tantras and practices to Padmasambhava. The mahayoga practices, in particular, the terma revelations of them, make up the foundation of Nyingma vajrayana practice.

Another important feature in the uppermost chamber of the stupa is the base of the *sokshing*, the massive wooden life-force pole that runs through the entire spire of the structure. The *sokshing* represents the central channel, or main yogic meridian, in the body of a realized meditator. If one looks at the entire stupa as the body of a Buddha, the *sokshing* is the core of the energetic body. The life-force pole has many texts calligraphed in golden letters upon it.

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The main text is *The Letter Of The Black Ashe*. This is one of the principle terms that the Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche discovered while in the West. The presence of *The Letter Of The Black Ashe* on the *sokshing* marks the guiding vision for Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's presentation of the dharma in the West, the Shambhala teachings. Shambhala is likened to an umbrella or a parasol protecting the buddhadharma in general and also it is a unique presentation of the dzogchen or atiyoga teachings.

If we look at The Great Stupa Of Dharmakaya as a presentation of the teachings coming down from above, we can see the stupa as a presentation of the entire path moving outwards from the Shambhala terma. From the central realization of the teacher come the teachings of Shambhala, a unique expression of the dzogchen. Around this are the eight vidyadharas, the source of the mahayoga practices that are likened to the ground for realizing dzogchen. At the base of the life force pole is Vajrasattva, the embodiment of all the yidams, and symbolic here of all the Eight Logos practices. The mahayoga section of the Rinchen Terdzö follows a similar layout; Vajrasattva is initially presented in the tantra section as the embodiment of all the yidams, after which comes the presentation in the sadhana section where all the yidams are presented sequentially as the Eight Logos.

Another theme is the three floors of the stupa. The realization of the mind of enlightenment, the ungraspable dharmakaya, comes first, and out of that comes the creative display of the sambhogakaya, the second level. Finally, the teachings descend to our world with the nirmanakaya form of the teacher, someone who communicates with us directly, face-to-face, in ordinary experience.

This brief description of the interior symbolism of The Great Stupa Of Dharmakaya gives a sense of the interconnections between the Shambhala terma, the vajrayana dharma, and the Buddhist path in general. While the upper level of the stupa symbolizes the Nyingma tradition and its connection to the Shambhala terma, it is important emphasize that all vajrayana teachings come from purity and therefore there is no conflict between one tradition and another. The ecumenical spirit of the Rime movement, which began in 19th century Tibet, exemplifies this. Through appreciating each tradition on its own terms, the Rime movement showed that all lineages of practice and study are able to share their blessings. For example, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's monastery, Surmang Dütsi Til, has retreat facilities for Kagyü and Nyingma styles of practice. These two traditions complement each other. And in Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's vision, both are protected by the central channel of the Shambhala vision and teachings.



## Culture, Enlightened Leadership, And The Rinchen Terdzö

An ongoing contemplation during and after the events in Orissa was the relationship between the Rinchen Terdzö, sovereignty, and enlightened culture. While the Rinchen Terdzö can be seen simply as a treasury of amazing practices, looking at the collection in the context of the development of Buddhist culture in India and Tibet sheds light on how the vajrayana is transmitted both in the tantric tradition in general and in Shambhala. For the most part, although there was occasional royal patronage of the dharma in India, a stable vajrayana Buddhist kingdom never arose there the way it did in Tibet. Once a genuine vajrayana culture was established through the support of a royal lineage in Tibet, it paved the way for incredible growth of Buddhist lineage, practice, and scholarship.



King Trisong Detsen  
Photograph by Walker Blaine

Padmasambhava's activities in Tibet, and the eleven centuries of Tibetan termas highlighted by the Rinchen Terdzö, would not have arisen without the vision and example of King Trisong Detsen.

The Rinchen Terdzö can be seen as a record of what can flourish and what is needed in a dharmic culture. The collection preserves the very best of the revitalizing practices that arose in the mindstreams of tertöns who were rebirths of the realized teachers who helped create the foundations of a kingdom guided by the principles of enlightenment. In the mahayoga section of the Rinchen Terdzö, the practices of the guru provide the means for everyone to discover the principle of awakened leadership within themselves. The practices of the yidams of the Eight Logos provide a comprehensive means to develop all possible attainments. The practices of the dakinis and protectors provide the basis for various beneficial activities to spread throughout a dharmic realm. The anuyoga and atiyoga practices are the means for people to fully ripen and bring their practice to ultimate perfection. All these qualities of practice manifested in Tibet based on the initial inspiration of a dharmic kingdom.

Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's brilliance was to transplant the dharma in the style of both Padmasambhava and the warrior-king Gesar of Ling. He created a culture, not just a



Gesar in the aspect of a drala,  
from the Gesar shrine room in Orissa, India  
Photograph by Walker Blaine

sangha, to ensure the survival of the dharma in this world. He established a family lineage in the center of a dharmic society in order to preserve the vajrayana tradition in a modern context. We often say that Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche brought the dharma to the West, but we can also say he created a world, a culture, and a context for the dharma to land when it came from the East.

This wisdom of the Vidyadhara's approach is mirrored in the histories of how the vajrayana was transmitted into this world. Generally speaking, the vajrayana came into the world initially through a royal lineage. For example, the Kalachakra was first presented by the Buddha to King Dawa Sangpo, the ruler of Shambhala who had requested a way to practice the dharma without becoming a monastic and renouncing his kingdom. The histories of the arrival of the mahayoga, anuyoga, and

atiyoga teachings are similar. In most cases, a ruler or royal heir requested the dharma from Shakyamuni or a transcendent buddha, and the lineage began from there.

Empowerment rituals in the vajrayana tradition generally emphasize the practitioner holding the view of an enlightened monarch. In most empowerments, the disciple is symbolically made a king or queen in order to emphasize the creative display and power of awakened mind. Through this, the student begins to experience the world as an enlightened kingdom, the realm of basic goodness. This view forms the basis of enlightened society. It all revolves around the idea of becoming awakened to our own inherent wisdom and thus becoming a king or queen of our own experience. Enlightened society is about sharing that experience with others. At the same time, enlightened society has a genuine king and queen holding the vision at the very center of the kingdom.

The royal patronage that led to the flowering of the dharma in Tibet was not a normal coincidence. The Buddhist explanation of causality is that things happen because of beings' collective karma and aspirations. A Buddhist culture or kingdom arises because of the wishes and actions of everyone involved. It comes from aspirations coming together with the right

causes and conditions, rather than good luck or a ruler's ambition. King Trisong Detsen was, in a sense, waiting to foster the dharma, and the right conditions were there for such good fortune to happen.

I was eager to witness the Sakyong's enthronement at the Rinchen Terdzö in part because it was a chance to re-experience the ceremony used to enthrone him and his father as the sovereign of Shambhala. The enthronement ritual, *The Blazing Jewel Of Sovereignty*, is the empowerment that Padmasambhava used to confirm King Trisong Detsen as a dharma monarch. When a teacher is crowned a ruler of the kingdom of dharma, it marks the beginning of a cycle of dharmic culture. The community, which is made up of individuals who've recognized their own basic goodness recognizes the teacher as a ruler who is capable of guiding the development of dharmic culture, enlightened society.



Photograph by Walker Blaine

By the time *The Blazing Jewel Of Sovereignty* is conferred on the recipient during the Rinchen Terdzö, the future dharmaraja has already been filled with all the riches of the teachings. The enthronement is a confirmation, but it is also the time for the teacher to begin to share what he or she has received. It was especially fitting that the Sakyong was again crowned a dharma king after receiving such a huge wave of spiritual riches belonging to his father, the Druk Sakyong. May the Sakyong's wish for the new golden age, the dawn of enlightened society, come to quick fruition in our lifetime.



## The Tertön, The Chödak, And The Shambhala Terma Tradition



Photograph by Walker Blaine

*Termas*, or hidden treasures, are teachings concealed by Padmasambhava and other great masters during the initial spread of Buddhism in Tibet. Terma was created as a means to revitalize and strengthen the dharma in future times when both the world and the teachings would be threatened by degradation and loss of heart. Generally speaking, terma is a distinctive feature of the Nyingma lineage, the earliest Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Although most *termas* come to us through Padmasambhava, some originate from other lineage masters. These masters include Vimalamitra and Vairochana, who were Padmasambhava's contemporaries, as well as the warrior-king Gesar of Ling, who is regarded as an emanation of Padmasambhava.

*Tertons*, or treasure revealers, are rebirths of the twenty-five principle disciples of Padmasambhava, who were present when a terma teaching was originally given by Padmasambhava. Among those disciples, one would be chosen and given the command by Padmasambhava to reveal the teaching in future times as a terma. Additionally, tertons from eastern Tibet are sometimes rebirths of bodhisattva-warriors from Gesar's era. Several recent tertons, such as Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, have revealed Gesar *termas*. Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok had a vision of the site where Gesar's palace once stood in Golok, and a commemorative temple was built there in the 1990s. The terton who has discovered the greatest number of Gesar *termas* is His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche.

The Shambhala terma was received by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche from two sources: Gesar of Ling and the Rigden Kings. The Rigdens are enlightened rulers of the legendary kingdom of Shambhala, who are featured in the teachings of the Kalachakra tantra and who many Tibetans believe guided and inspired King Gesar. A tantra is a root text of the Indian vajrayana tradition. All *termas* have to connect with a tantra because *termas* function as a revitalization of the dharma, and in particular, of the vajrayana teachings. While the Kalachakra tantra is echoed in the Shambhala terma through the presence of the Rigdens, the

Shambhala terma also has a connection with the Vajrakilaya tantra, which speaks extensively about the transformation of aggression. Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche began discovering the Shambhala terma as a boy in eastern Tibet, all the while knowing the Shambhala teachings were destined for the West, or more broadly speaking, the modern world.

The *chödak* is a traditional role that is vital to the transmission and preservation of a terma lineage. A *chödak* is the immediate successor of a *tertön*, and the word *chödak* is sometimes used to refer to a living holder of a terma lineage. *Chö* is the word for the dharma or the teachings, and *dak* is short for *dakpo*, which means both ‘lord’ and ‘owner’. After a terma is discovered, a *tertön* will give one or several



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

*chödaks* the primary responsibility for propagating a terma. Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche once explained that a *chödak* is necessary because a terma is like gold, but people may not initially recognize it; the *chödak* has to make the gold visible to others so that they can clearly see the terma and attain realization through it.

To be able to do this, a *chödak*, as the ‘owner’ of a terma, is given the authority and responsibility to create supporting texts so that a terma can be easily practiced and understood. Some termas are quite pithy and need liturgies and manuals to be practiced properly. Other termas might be too complicated to practice easily and so the *chödak* must create a simpler liturgy or practice manual. *Chödaks* may write *sadhanas*, practice manuals, *ngondro* texts, and auxiliary liturgies based on a terma text.

In some cases, a previous birth of the *chödak* was present when the *tertön* originally received the contents of a terma at the time when both the *tertön* and the *chödak* were disciples of Padmasambhava. In other cases, the *chödak* was not a disciple of Padmasambhava, and instead was blessed to carry the terma forward by the power of Padmasambhava’s enlightened intention and aspiration.

*Chödaks* are appointed for particular qualities they might have in spreading the teachings. Sometimes a *chödak* will be someone with great power or influence because there will be great benefit if a particular terma spreads widely. In other cases, there may be more benefit if a terma does not spread widely, and the *chödak* might be more of a secret

practitioner (someone very humble, with hidden qualities) and have only a few students. Terma lineages are often maintained in a family line. One reason for this is that blood descendents of realized teachers are considered to carry a particularly strong blessing and potential for realization.

Termas are transmitted in an empowerment, or *abhisheka*, from teacher to student like other vajrayana practice lineages. An empowerment is a direct presentation of a path of practice within the context of a particular tradition. Generally speaking, an empowerment is based on a teacher's realization and is bestowed by means of an empowerment liturgy. Sometimes a tertön will not use an empowerment liturgy because the tertön is so closely connected to the source of the terma. However, since the chödak and subsequent lineage holders do not have the same mindstream as the tertön, an empowerment liturgy is necessary in order to transmit the practice from the chödak's time onward. In order to create a clear and reliable entry into a terma tradition for future students, a chödak will write an empowerment ritual if the tertön did not write one.

In the context of the Shambhala terma, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche composed what we know as *The Werma Sadhana* based on the root texts in the Shambhala terma cycle. However, he never wrote an empowerment liturgy for this sadhana. In order to ensure the proper transmission and continuity of the Shambhala teachings, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche composed the *Rigden Abhisheka*, based on the root texts of the terma. The Sakyong has also written several practices and commentaries to ensure a clear and stable transmission of the Shambhala tradition for future students. The *Primordial Rigden Ngondro* is an example of a practice written by a chödak to prepare people to enter a terma tradition with full confidence and understanding.

Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche discovered his well-known terma, *The Sadhana of Mahamudra*, while on retreat in Bhutan in the late 1960s. At that time, he spontaneously gave a formal empowerment for this practice on a few occasions in India, but the empowerment ritual was never written down. His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche later wrote the empowerment text for *The Sadhana of Mahamudra* at the request of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. This was possible because of His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche's extraordinary realization and an agreement between him and Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche that if one of them could not finish his work, the other would finish it for him. Someone who attended one of Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche's empowerments in India remarked that *The Sadhana of Mahamudra* empowerment, bestowed by Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, was quite similar to the one he received from the Trungpa Rinpoche.

It is my aspiration that this article will further an understanding of the depth of the terma

tradition and the many roles fulfilled by Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. I was inspired to investigate the purpose of the chödak during the three-month long Rinchen Terdzö bestowed on the Sakyong by His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche in 2009. The Rinchen Terdzö, or “Precious Treasury of Termas,” is a collection of nearly 900 terma teachings and empowerments that present the essence of the practice and realization transmitted within the Nyingma lineage. His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche received the Rinchen Terdzö directly from Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche and was delighted to at last be able to pass this lineage of the Rinchen Terdzö on to the Sakyong.



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

In addition to his responsibilities as a chödak for the Shambhala terma, sovereign of Shambhala, and carrying the Nyingma lineages once held by his father, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche also holds the Kagyu lineage transmission, which was bestowed on him by his father in 1985 during the Vajrayogini abhisheka in Marburg, Germany. May the Sakyong’s retreat bring all possible excellence, may the lineage of the Sakyongs and Shambhala thrive for hundreds of generations, and may we all realize the meaning of the profound riches of the Shambhala, Kagyu, and Nyingma teachings.



## Final Reflections



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

If one goes on a long or short retreat it can take months or years to understand and integrate the experience. The more one brings to the meditation during the retreat, the more far-ranging the effect it can have on one's life. While I had some sense of what the Rinchen Terdzö meant to the Sakyong and Shambhala before I went to India, I had little idea what receiving three months of transmissions in a group retreat would mean to me. It will be a long time before I understand the depth and impact of attending the Rinchen Terdzö, but I wanted share some preliminary reflections with you at the end of this book.

A major insight came from being at the Rinchen Terdzö and receiving hundreds of empowerments for practices that I was unlikely to do. There are ample warnings against receiving lots of empowerments without an intention to practice them. Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche often taught about spiritual materialism and our tendency to convert the spiritual path into something to secure our own emotional world of attachment. Spiritual shopping avoids genuine surrender into the meaning of the dharma. Over the years, while admiring people who attended long empowerments like the Rinchen Terdzö, I sometimes wondered what was the point in light of the Vidyadhara's teachings.

The irony of contemplating this question during hundreds of empowerments at the Rinchen Terdzö reminded me of another experience I had of the tables being turned on me regarding questions of spiritual materialism. A few years ago, Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso Rinpoche asked me to go on pilgrimage in Asia dressed in white like Milarepa or a sadhu. There are white-robed lineages within the Tibetan tradition, but until that pilgrimage I viewed Westerners in that sort of attire as potentially misguided or overdramatic. However, once I was dressed in robes like that myself and enduring the direct praise, criticism, curiosity, and avoidance of Western and Asian monastics and lay people alike, I was forced to confront some of my own spiritual conceit and armchair prejudice. I learned that a dharmic outlook and the application of practice could transform something that looked spiritually materialistic on the outside. Living that experience from the inside helped me see some of my own preconceptions, naïveté, and lack of understanding.

Attending the three months of empowerments turned out to be an active process of opening up to His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche, a highly accomplished teacher who regards Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche as one of his gurus. I realized that the point of being at the Rinchen Terdzö wasn't to gather teachings I might not practice, but to learn from a realized teacher in the context of receiving the empowerments. I also came to see the Rinchen Terdzö as a group retreat and an opportunity to witness the Sakyong's path, rather than making it an avoidance of my own path while gathering personal credentials.

Another aspect of receiving hundreds of empowerments had to do boredom and seeing the experience from another angle. Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche wrote about a level of boredom that isn't agitated, but is gentle, appreciative, and aware. In many ways, the Rinchen Terdzö was like a dathün except that the focus was not on sitting meditation, but on opening to a teacher and the lineage over and over again. This kind of situation is invaluable for anyone seriously engaged in vajrayana practice. As the weeks went by in Orissa, I found myself increasingly grateful to the Sakyong for asking me to come to India.

While in Orissa I vividly saw the difference between an ordinary practitioner like myself and someone like Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, who has the responsibility of passing the lineage on to his successor and training tens of thousands of others. As I watched his devotion and confidence during the countless empowerments His Eminence conducted from the throne, I saw how the Sakyong's years of study with the Vidyadhara, His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, His Holiness Penor Rinpoche, and many other great teachers have ripened him into an extraordinary being. Many of the conversations I had with the Sakyong during the three months of the Rinchen Terdzö left me amazed by the breadth of his vision and understanding. I was regularly humbled by the kind and patient way he dealt with my speed while walking me through a variety of complex topics. Sometimes I cringed while listening to the recordings of our conversations because of the number of points I'd missed the first time around.

His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche also impressed me tremendously. He seems to be 100% about carrying on the practice tradition. The Rinchen Terdzö placed incredible demands on him, and yet he was the essence of good humor and luminous brilliance from start to finish. I do not think a person without genuine realization could accomplish what he did. His exertion and dignity gave me a glimpse of how hard people have worked to preserve the dharma in Tibet, and it gave a glimpse into the depth of training that gave us Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. It was edifying to witness all of this. It is easy to take the dharma for granted in this age of email, fast food, and mail order shopping.

For my own practice, it is still difficult to say what I have gained. During an opening

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meeting with the Western students in December, Jigme Rinpoche said we would receive a lot of seeds. For years I've heard this sort of statement about empowerments, but I have not appreciated the meaning of it. It sounds like something you would say to people to cheer them up in case they don't understand the full meaning of some spiritual event. However, the truth is that the only person in the history of the dharma who completely realized the meaning of an empowerment on the spot was King Dawa Sangpo when he received the Kalachakra empowerment from Shakyamuni Buddha. The rest of us at empowerments have seeds of enlightenment planted that are then our responsibility to ripen.

In Orissa, I got new glimpse of how significant these seeds are. This came from seeing the Sakyong's determination and joy to receive his father's lineage of the main Nyingma termas in order to pass it on the future Sakyong and to future practitioners. What could be more important than passing on the seeds of wisdom? Along with this remembrance, the memory of His Eminence continues to be a reminder of not only of the seed, but also of the fruition.

These were some of the things that have come to mind in reflection on the Rinchen Terdzö. May all beings quickly realize the wisdom inherent in their own nature, their basic goodness. May all genuine spiritual traditions nurture and open all beings into the path of complete enlightenment.



Photograph by Christoph Schönherr

## APPENDICES

### General Outline Of The Rinchen Terdzö Empowerments

The following condensed outline was created by Patricia Kirigin with reference to: the Rinchen Terdzö empowerment record translated by Peter Roberts, the outline in the back of *The Autobiography Of Jamgön Kongtriül* by Richard Barron, and the Tsurphu outline of the Rinchen Terdzö (in Tibetan). The numbers in brackets give an idea of the relative length of each section; they are not exact because numbers were also assigned to about one hundred tris, and because empowerments can be divided up in different ways. The four main divisions of the Rinchen Terdzö are the biographies of Padmasambhava and the tertöns, the instructions for performing the Rinchen Terdzö, the actual empowerments, and the supplementary volumes. What follows is the outline of the empowerments section.

### Rinchen Terdzö Empowerment Outline

**Development Stage, Mahayoga** (Ground) [794 empowerments, Dec 5-Feb 21]

**Tantras** (profound)

**Sadhanas** (vast)

Root Sadhanas

Sadhanas Combining the Three Roots

Individual Specific Sadhanas

Guru (the root of blessings)

Outer (Supplication)

Inner (Peaceful)

Dharmakaya

Sambhogakaya

Nirmanakaya

Main Practices

Auxiliary Practices

Secret (Wrathful)

[Continued]

- Yidam (the root of siddhis)
  - General sadhanas of peaceful and wrathful deities
  - Specific practices of the Eight Logos
    - Five Transcendent Deities
      1. Manjushri (enlightened body)
        - Peaceful Manjushri
        - Wrathful Manjushri (Yamantaka)
      2. Padma Speech (enlightened speech)
        - Peaceful
          - Amitayus
          - Amitabha
          - Mahakarunikaya (Avalokiteshvara)
        - Wrathful
          - Red Hayagriva
          - Black Hayagriva
      3. Samyak (enlightened mind)
        - Peaceful Vajrasattva
        - Wrathful Vajraheruka
        - Vajrapani
      4. Amritaguna (enlightened qualities)
        - Main Practices (men drup)
        - Branch Practices (chu len)
      5. Vajrakilaya (enlightened activity)
    - One Intermediate Deity
      6. Mamo Bötong
        - Main Practices [HETSR 497-499]
        - Branch Practice: Jñanadakini Simhamuka
    - Two Worldly Deities
      7. Jigten Chötö Worldly Offerings and Praises
      8. Möpa Dra-Ngak Wrathful Mantras
  - Dakini (root of enlightened activity)
  - Protectors
    - Principal Wisdom and Karma Protectors
    - Various Teaching Guardians and Goddesses
    - Related Bön Teachings
- Auxiliary Sadhanas of Activity Rituals
  - General Rituals
  - Rituals for Enacting Specific Kinds of Activity
    - Supreme Activity
    - Ordinary Activity
      - For Various Activities
      - For Specific Individual Activities
        - Protection (11 subsections)
        - Pacification (7 subsections)
        - Enrichment (6 subsections)
        - Magnetizing
        - Destroying

[Continued]

**Completion Stage, Anuyoga** (Path) [7 empowerments, Feb 22]

**Atiyoga** (Fruition) [81 empowerments, Feb 28-March 6]

Practice Instructions

Mind Section [no empowerments]

Space Section [no empowerments]

Oral Instruction Section

Ati

Vimalamitra

Padmakara

Vairochana

Those three united into one view

Chiti

[General key points of the profound tantras of the instruction section]

Yangti

[The teachings on the Very Secret, Uncommon Oral Linage]

Conclusion: the essence of the three virtuous yogas combined into one

## Empowerment List

In order to keep the size of this document manageable, the empowerment list has been omitted. Should you wish to obtain a copy, please email: [dorjenaljorpa@gmail.com](mailto:dorjenaljorpa@gmail.com).



Photograph by Benny Fong





## THANKS, GRATITUDE, AND SOURCES

According to the dharma, everything happens by interdependence and there is no special individual who is the sole creator of everything. This was especially true of the Rinchen Terdzö blog. It is important to clarify that most, if not all, of the good ideas in this document did not come from me. They came from His Eminence Namkha Drimed Rinpoche, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, Gyetrul Jigme Rinpoche, the other teachers mentioned in this book, the authors of the many books mentioned in the bibliography, and so on. My aspiration is that this book becomes an inspiration for more practice and study of the terma tradition, the Rinchen Terdzö, and Shambhala Buddhism's heritage in general. While the following is by no means a complete list of everyone who helped out, I want to give thanks to the following individuals who helped make the blog and the book possible.

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*Masters Of Meditation And Miracles*, by Tulku Thondop Rinpoche

*Hidden Teachings Of Tibet*, by Tulku Thondop Rinpoche

*The Lotus Born*, by Yeshe Tsogyal

*The Words Of My Perfect Teacher*, by Jigme Lingpa

*Deity, Mantra, And Wisdom: Development Stage Meditation In Tibetan Buddhist Tantras*, by Jigme Lingpa, Patrul Rinpoche, and Getse Mahapandita

*Buddhist Ethics*, by Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye

*Systems Of Buddhist Tantra*, by Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye

*The Torch Of Certainty* by Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye

*Perfect Conduct*, by Ngari Panchen

*Lord Of The Dance: Autobiography Of A Tibetan Lama*, Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche

*Nectar Of Sacred Advice*, Volume I, by His Eminence Tai Situ Rinpoche

*The Rime Philosophy Of Tibet*, by Ringu Tulku Rinpoche

*The Life Of Chogyur Lingpa*, by Orgyen Tobgyal

*The Brief History Of The Rinchen Terdzö*, by the Ngagyur Nyingma Institute

*Buddhism, The Spiritual Lineage Of Dzogchen Masters*, by Karma Wangchuk

*History Of The Sixteen Karmapas Of Tibet*, by Karma Thinley

*Machig Labdron And The Foundations Of Chöd*, by Jerome Edou

*Straight From The Heart, Buddhist Pith Instructions*, translated and introduced by Karl Brunnhölzl

Various transcripts of teachings by Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso Rinpoche.

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*Born In Tibet*, by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche

*Journey Without Goal*, by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche

*The Lion's Roar: An Introduction To Tantra*, by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche

*Crazy Wisdom*, by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche

*The Heart Of The Buddha*, by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche

*Training The Mind*, by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche

*First Thought Best Thought*, by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche

The 1973-1975 *Vajradhatu Vajrayana Seminary Transcripts*, soon to be published in *The Root Text Project*.

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## And You Too...

Finally, thanks to all of you for joining in. The main reason the Sakyong wanted this blog was to bring the sangha on the journey with him. Without you the blog would not have happened at all. May all beings quickly realize the meaning of the Rinchen Terdzö and may all beings enjoy the blessings of these teachings in the dawn of the new golden age.

## About The Author

Walker Blaine completed his bachelor's degree at Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado in 1986. He spent the next 15 years practicing and working in rural retreat centers in North America. From 2001 to 2008, he divided his time between retreat, pilgrimage, and study in Asia and the West. He is a member of the Nalanda Translation Committee and lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Walker's two CDs of Buddhist music, *Highland Eyes* and *Body Of Light* can be sampled at iTunes and at <http://www.highlandeyes.com>.



Walker Blaine and Patricia Kirigin  
Photograph by Ursula Von Vacano



